

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS'
EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE IN ADVISING STUDENT-ATHLETES ON THE NCAA
COLLEGE TRANSITION PROCESS

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF APPENDICES	x
ABSTRACT	xi
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Background of the Problem	3
Increasing Importance of College Athletics	3
NCAA College Transition Process Complexities	4
The Role of High School Counselors	4
Potential Gaps and Challenges	5
Statement of the Problem	6
Limited Training and Professional Development	6
Time Constraints and Workload	6
Awareness of Resources and Support Services	6
Understanding the Unique Needs of Student-Athletes	7
Purpose of the Study	7
Research Questions	8
Significance of the Study	10
Enhancing Support for Student-Athletes	10
Informing Training and Professional Development	10
Filling a Research Gap	10
Improving College and Career Readiness	11
Implications for Policy and Practice	11
Definition of Terms	12
Limitations and Delimitations	13
Organization of the Study	15
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	17
The History of School Counseling	18
ASCA National Model	20

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

School Counselors' Knowledge and Training	22
The Role of the Modern School Counselor	25
Academic Support	26
Social-Emotional Development	26
Crisis Intervention	26
Collaboration and Advocacy	27
Data Analysis and Program Evaluation	27
Leadership and Professional Development	28
College and Career Readiness	28
The History of the NCAA	30
The Modern High School Student-Athlete	31
The Relationship between the NCAA and High Schools	33
NCAA Academic Eligibility	35
Student-Athlete Transition to College	37
Research Related to High School Counselors and Student-Athletes	39
Counseling and Advising Experiences	39
Sports Counseling Competency	40
Multicultural Competency	41
Knowledge and Perceptions	43
School Counseling Implications	47
Theoretical Framework	49
Ecological Systems Theory	50
Social Cognitive Theory	52
Literature Review Summary	55
3. METHODOLOGY	57
Research Design Overview	57
Sampling	59
Hypothesis	60
Instrumentation	60
Data Collection Procedures	61
Data Analysis	63
Validity and Reliability	64
Ethical Considerations	65
4. RESULTS	67
Study Participant Demographics	68
Research Question 1: Lived Experiences	72
Roles and Responsibilities	73
Course Scheduling	74
Consultation	75
Transcripts	76

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Educational Programs	77
NCAA Eligibility	78
Athletic Job Title	78
Research Question 2: Key Challenges and Obstacles	79
Lack of Knowledge	80
Lack of Known Resources	80
Frequent Changes	81
Lack of Communication with Stakeholders	81
Athletic Department	82
Parents	83
Students	83
Research Question 3: Experiences and Training	84
Lack of Formal Training	85
On the Job Training	86
Self-Taught	86
Mentorship	87
Grad School Exposure	88
Attended Workshops	88
District Level	88
National Conferences	90
Webinars	91
Local Conferences	91
Research Question 4: Strategies and Resources	91
Strategies	92
Individual Meetings	93
Coaches' Referrals	93
Classroom Guidance	95
Parent Education	95
Resources	96
NCAA Website	96
NCAA Guide for School Counselors & Guide for the College-Bound	
Student-Athlete	97
Recommended Readings	97
Research Question 5: Recommendations from School Counselors	99
Collaborations	100
NCAA Liaison	100
District level	101
Athletic Department	101
Curriculum Development	101
Graduate Training Programs	102
Practicum/Internship	102
Professional Development	102
Workshops	103
Summary	103

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	105
Limitations	106
Implications	107
Recommendations	108
School Counseling Practice	109
Future Research	109
Conclusion	110
REFERENCES	112
APPENDICES	122
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER	123
INFORMED CONSENT FORM	126
SURVEY INVITATION LETTER	129
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL GUIDE	132
QUESTIONNAIRE	134

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Study Participant Demographics.....	69
2. Research Question 1 Major Themes: NCAA Experiences of School Counselors....	73
3. Research Question 2 Major Themes: Key Challenges and Obstacles	80
4. Research Question 3 Major Themes: Knowledge and Training.....	85
5. Research Question 4 Major Themes: Strategies and Resources.....	92
6. Research Question 5 Major Themes: Recommendations from School Counselors.....	100

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Page
A. Institutional Review Board Approval Letter.....	123
B. Informed Consent.....	126
C. Survey Invitation Letter	129
D. Interview Protocol Guide.....	132
E. Questionnaire	134

ABSTRACT

LEAH L. HOWARD

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS' EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE IN ADVISING STUDENT-ATHLETES ON THE NCAA COLLEGE TRANSITION PROCESS

Under the direction of DAVID LANE, Ph.D.

This phenomenological investigation examined the experiences and knowledge of high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process. The study sought to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges, successes, and experiences of school counselors in supporting student-athletes during a critical transition period. School counselors often receive insufficient training in this area, resulting in a lack of adequate support for student-athletes to navigate the college transition process effectively and maximize their opportunities for postsecondary education (Paramo-Garfio, 2017; Vaughn & Smith, 2018). The research was conducted using interviews to capture the lived experiences and perspectives of nine Georgia high school counselors. The research examined school counselors' roles and their facilitation of advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process. The findings of this study may contribute to the existing literature and provide insights for improving support services and training programs for high school counselors working with student-athletes (Stahlke and Cranmore 2021). The study is concluded with recommendations for a comprehensive and collaborative approach in facilitating a successful college transition for student-athletes.

Keywords: school counselor, NCAA regulations, college transition, student-athlete

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

School counselors, who are professionals within schools that provide programming to improve student outcomes, play a vital role in guiding and supporting students through the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) college transition process (ASCA, 2023; Cole, 2006). The NCAA is the governing body responsible for organizing and regulating college athletics in the United States and setting the standards that maintain information regarding student-athlete eligibility requirements (NCAA, 2021; Zagelbaum, 2014 (b)). Knowing NCAA regulations, and the standards that maintain information regarding student-athlete eligibility requirements, is essential for school counselors (NCAA, 2023 (a)). This helps to effectively assist student-athletes, students enrolled in academic institutions who also participate in organized athletic competitions, pursuing collegiate athletic opportunities (Carpenter, 2010; NCAA, 2023 (a)). School counselors need to be familiar with the NCAA Eligibility Center and its guidelines, which outline the academic and amateurism criteria for student-athletes to participate in NCAA sports (McCalla, 2013; Padilla, 2015).

To support students in meeting NCAA eligibility requirements, school counselors must have a comprehensive understanding of the NCAA's core course requirements, grade point average calculations, and standardized test score expectations (Carpenter, 2010; McCalla, 2013; NCAA, 2023 (a)). As of 2020, standardized test scores are no longer required for NCAA initial-eligibility purposes (NCAA, 2023 (b)). This knowledge of NCAA requirements allows school counselors to provide accurate information to student-athletes and help them plan their academic course selections accordingly (Antshel et al., 2016). School counselors should also be well-versed in NCAA registration procedures, including the necessary steps to create an account,

submit required documentation, and track progress toward eligibility certification (Midkiff, 2014; Padilla, 2015).

In addition to academic considerations, school counselors should be aware of the recruitment and college selection process for student-athletes. This entails knowledge of NCAA recruiting rules, contact periods, and official visits (Cole, 2006; Stambulova & Wylleman, 2014). School counselors can guide student-athletes in navigating the complexities of recruitment and understanding the implications of their decisions, and also connect them with appropriate transition resources, which could be materials, tools, and information available to assist in advising, including handouts and online materials (Cole, 2006; NCAA, 2023 (a); Sackett et al., 2018; Southall et al., 2015). School counselors also play a crucial role in advocating for student-athletes' needs during the college transition process (Wilder, 2018; Woods & Domina, 2014). This includes communicating with college admissions offices, athletic departments, and coaches to make sure that students receive necessary academic accommodations, support services, and financial aid opportunities (Vaughn & Smith, 2018). School counselors can assist student-athletes in effectively presenting their athletic accomplishments and aspirations to college admissions committees, leveraging their experiences to enhance their college applications (Cole, 2006; Collins, 2014).

Furthermore, school counselors need to stay updated on any changes or updates to NCAA rules and regulations that may impact student-athletes (Antshel et al., 2016; McCalla, 2013). They can achieve this by attending professional development workshops and conferences, and staying connected with professional networks and resources dedicated to NCAA compliance (NCAA, 2023 (a); Paolini, 2019). These conferences include but are not limited to the American School Counseling Association Conference, which hosts an NCAA Eligibility Center Hot Topics

session, the annual NCAA Convention, the annual National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Conference, NIL (Name, Image, and Likeness) Summit, and the National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC) workshops. By possessing comprehensive knowledge of the NCAA college transition process, which in this case refers to the series of steps, requirements, and considerations involved in transitioning from high school athletics to participating in college sports programs, school counselors can provide invaluable guidance, support, and advocacy to student-athletes (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017; NCAA, 2021; Schmidtknecht, 2023). Their expertise helps ensure that student-athletes are well-informed, empowered to make knowledgeable decisions, and equipped to navigate the complex landscape of collegiate athletics successfully (August, 2020).

Background of the Problem

High school counselors are a specific group of professionals who provide counseling and guidance services to students in high schools. The background of the problem involves several key aspects: The increasing importance of college athletics, complexities of NCAA regulations, the role of high school counselors, and potential gaps and challenges (Carpenter, 2010; Cole, 2006; Fletcher et al., 2003; Gerlach, 2018; Midkiff, 2014).

Increasing Importance of College Athletics

College athletics play a significant role in the lives of student-athletes, offering opportunities for personal growth, skill development, and potential scholarship opportunities (Bimper, 2014; Midkiff, 2014; Navarro et al., 2019; Tyrance et al., 2013). As such, the transition from high school to college athletics is a crucial period that can greatly impact the academic and athletic trajectory of student-athletes (Paramo-Garfio, 2017). The collegiate athletics realm offers abundant opportunities for aspiring student-athletes (Cosh & Tully, 2013). However, the NCAA

college-going process can be intricate and challenging, posing difficulties for many student-athletes to navigate effectively (Paramo-Garfio, 2017). This process encompasses evolving academic criteria, diverse admission prerequisites, athletic recruitment, and securing financial aid or scholarships, among other factors (Cole, 2006; Zaarour & Bargal, 2023). Without the necessary resources and guidance to navigate this process, student-athletes may face barriers to pursuing collegiate athletics, potentially ending their athletic careers at the high school level (Stambulova & Wylleman, 2014; Tyrance et al., 2013).

NCAA College Transition Process Complexities

The NCAA has established guidelines and requirements for student-athletes to be eligible to compete at the collegiate level (Paramo-Garfio, 2017; Tyrance et al., 2013). These guidelines encompass academic eligibility, recruiting regulations, and other factors that student-athletes and their school counselors must navigate (McCalla, 2013). The college transition process can be challenging due to its complexity, specific deadlines, and varying requirements (Midkiff, 2014; Padilla, 2015; Poynton & Lapan, 2017).

The Role of High School Counselors

High school counselors play a crucial role in advising student-athletes, providing them with support and guidance as they navigate their academic and athletic pursuits (Vaughn & Smith, 2018). They assist in creating schedules that accommodate practice sessions, competitions, and travel requirements while ensuring students meet graduation requirements and pursue their academic goals (Winters & Gurney, 2012). School counselors provide student-athletes with information and resources to explore college options and make informed decisions about their future (Gerlach, 2018; Midkiff, 2014). School counselors can help athletes identify colleges with strong athletic programs that match their abilities and interests, as well as

institutions that offer academic programs in their desired fields of study (Carpenter, 2010). For student-athletes aspiring to compete at the collegiate level, school counselors can assist with navigating the NCAA eligibility requirements (Padilla, 2015; Paramo-Garfio, 2017). They can help students understand the academic standards, core course requirements, and other criteria set forth by the NCAA, ensuring they are on track to meet the necessary qualifications (NCAA, 2021). School counselors can guide student-athletes in identifying and pursuing scholarship opportunities (Carpenter, 2010). They can provide information on athletic scholarships, academic scholarships, and other forms of financial aid, helping students understand the application process, deadlines, and requirements for each opportunity (Paolini, 2019). School counselors are positioned to help athletes manage stress, balance their academic and athletic commitments, and address any personal or social-emotional issues that may arise (Gimbert et al., 2023; Ryan et al., 2018).

School counselors may also collaborate with coaches, teachers, and parents to promote the overall well-being of student-athletes (Moreland et al., 2018; Morton & Upton, 2020). School counselors assist athletes in developing effective time management skills, prioritizing tasks, and maintaining a healthy balance between academics and athletics (August, 2020). However, the specific experiences and knowledge of high school counselors in this domain have received limited research attention (Carpenter, 2010; Cole, 2006; McCalla, 2013; Midkiff, 2014; Paramo-Garfio, 2017).

Potential Gaps and Challenges

Research suggests that high school counselors may face various challenges when advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process (Paramo-Garfio, 2017). These challenges may include limited training and resources specific to college athletics, time

constraints, a lack of awareness of NCAA regulations, and difficulties in balancing the needs of student-athletes with other counseling responsibilities (McCalla, 2013; Mitchell, 2021). This study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge base and inform practices that enhance the support provided to student-athletes by examining the specific challenges, gaps, and potential areas for improvement (Navarro et al., 2019).

Statement of the Problem

This research aims to examine school counselors' roles and responsibilities (ASCA, 2019) as well as various difficulties and advantages of the involvement and expertise of high school counselors in advising student-athletes regarding the NCAA college transition process.

Limited Training and Professional Development

High school counselors may receive limited training and professional development, which in this case is defined as the ongoing learning, training, and growth opportunities available to high school counselors to enhance their knowledge, skills, and competencies in advising student-athletes (ASCA, 2019; Mitchell, 2021; Paramo-Garfio, 2017). This can result in a lack of familiarity with the intricacies of NCAA regulations, eligibility requirements, and college athletic recruitment processes (McCalla, 2013).

Time Constraints and Workload

High school counselors often have demanding workloads and limited time to dedicate to individual student-athletes (Collins, 2014). Balancing the needs of student-athletes with other counseling responsibilities can be challenging, potentially impacting the level of attention and support they can provide during the NCAA college transition process (Goodman-Scott, 2015).

Awareness of Resources and Support Services

School counselors may not be fully aware of the resources, tools, and support services available to student-athletes (Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013). This lack of awareness can hinder their ability to provide comprehensive guidance and assistance to student-athletes, potentially leading to missed opportunities or inadequate support (López & Levy, 2013). Since the 2015-2016 academic year, the NCAA Eligibility Center has produced a “Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete.” As of the 2016-2017 academic year, the NCAA Eligibility Center has also produced an annual “Guide for School Counselors,” which provides up-to-date eligibility information for student-athletes (NCAA, 2023 (a)).

Understanding the Unique Needs of Student-Athletes

Student-athletes have unique needs and challenges that may differ from those of non-athletic students (Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013; Lumpkin & Favor, 2013; Mahoney, 2011). Balancing rigorous training schedules, travel requirements, competition pressures, and academic demands can be demanding (Zagelbaum, 2014 (b)). According to Gayles (2009) and Lumpkin and Favor (2013), student-athletes encounter various distinctive obstacles from their non-athlete counterparts, including the pressure to excel academically while also achieving success in their chosen sport. Student-athletes dedicate around twenty hours per week exclusively to practice or competition (NCSA College Recruiting, 2022). Student-athletes often experience significant financial pressure and face physical and psychological challenges (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017). High school counselors may face difficulties in fully understanding and addressing these specific needs, potentially impacting the effectiveness of their support (Neal et al., 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the perspectives and knowledge of high school counselors in their role of advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process. The

aim is to investigate the experiences of high school counselors by capturing their subjective perspectives and reflections through a phenomenological approach (Sackett et al., 2018). This in-depth understanding can provide valuable insights into the challenges, successes, and impact of school counselors' work in this domain. These challenges may include limited training, time constraints, or a lack of awareness of NCAA regulations (Mitchell, 2021). Understanding these challenges can inform the development of targeted interventions and support strategies (Vaughn & Smith, 2018).

By understanding the knowledge acquisition processes and specific needs of school counselors when working with student-athletes, the findings can inform the development of training programs and resources that enhance school counselors' effectiveness in supporting student-athletes (Cole, 2006; Stahlke & Cranmore, 2021). Identifying best practices, strategies, and recommendations that can enhance the guidance and assistance provided to student-athletes can aid in ultimately promoting high school student-athletes' academic success, well-being, and successful transition into college athletics (NCAA, 2021; Poynton & Lapan, 2017).

Research Questions

The structure of the study entailed the research interview conducted via telephone for convenience. The interviews lasted approximately one hour. During the interview, participants were asked open-ended questions related to the experiences and knowledge of high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process. Participant information questions were asked to gather demographic data. The conversation was audio-recorded for accuracy, and all data collected was kept strictly confidential. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to better understand the research question: What are

the lived experiences of high school counselors when advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process? The interview questions included:

1. What is your experience as a high school counselor when advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process?
2. What are the key challenges and obstacles experienced by high school counselors in supporting student-athletes throughout the NCAA college transition process?
3. What experiences do high school counselors have to acquire and develop their knowledge and understanding of the NCAA college transition process for student-athletes?
4. What experience do high school counselors have with utilizing strategies and resources to advise and support student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process?
5. What personal recommendations can be made by high school counselors to enhance the training and professional development of high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process?

The participant information questions include:

1. What is the type of institution where you are located? (Ex. public high school, private high school, urban, suburban, rural, lower class, middle class, upper class)
2. What is the level of emphasis placed on athletics? (low, medium, high)
3. How many years have you been counseling student-athletes?
4. How would you identify your main role within the school? (Ex. Guidance counselor, NCAA advising, course scheduling, etc.)
5. Were you a former athlete? If yes, please identify which level.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in several key areas, with the findings of the research being able to contribute to the enhancement of the counseling profession.

Enhancing Support for Student-Athletes

Understanding the experiences and knowledge of high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process can contribute to the development of more effective support systems (Paramo-Garfio, 2017). This examination provided valuable insights into the challenges experienced by student-athletes and offered guidance on enhancing their academic and personal development during this crucial transition period (Mitchell, 2021; Padilla, 2015).

Informing Training and Professional Development

By examining the experiences and knowledge acquisition of high school counselors, the research provided insights into areas that may require additional training or professional development (McCalla, 2013). It guided the development of specific training programs and resources to equip school counselors with the necessary skills and expertise to better support student-athletes (Carpenter, 2010; Midkiff, 2014).

Filling a Research Gap

The available literature on the involvement of high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process is limited, highlighting the need for additional investigation (Mitchell, 2021; Paramo-Garfio, 2017; Watson, 2006). To bridge this research gap, this study sought to conduct a comprehensive phenomenological exploration that delved into the lived experiences and perspectives of high school counselors. The study aimed to capture the intricate details and nuances of school counselors' encounters with student-athletes, shedding

light on their knowledge, challenges, and insights in navigating the NCAA college transition process (Paramo-Garfio, 2017). Through phenomenological investigation, the study provided an in-depth understanding of the school counselors' experiences, their unique perspectives, and the factors that influence their ability to effectively guide student-athletes through this transition period (Sackett et al., 2018). By exploring the school counselors' lived experiences, the study illuminated their successes, struggles, and the strategies they employed to support student-athletes in balancing their athletic pursuits and academic obligations (Lujan, 2010).

Improving College and Career Readiness

Effective guidance and support can impact student-athletes' college and career readiness (August, 2020; Schmidtknecht, 2023; Zigelbaum, 2014 (b)). By understanding the experiences and knowledge of high school counselors, the research informs interventions and practices that promote successful transitions, potentially leading to improved academic outcomes, career opportunities, and overall well-being for student-athletes (Mahoney, 2011).

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings have practical implications for policymakers, educational institutions, and counseling professionals involved in supporting student-athletes. The study can inform the development of policies, programs, and best practices that promote a smooth and successful transition for student-athletes into the collegiate environment (Carpenter, 2010; Johnson et al., 2018). Overall, the significance lies in its potential to contribute to the understanding of high school counselors' experiences and knowledge in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process (Cole, 2006; Schmidtknecht, 2023). By addressing this topic, the research may make meaningful contributions to the field of school counseling, student-athlete support, and college readiness.

Definition of Terms

This section provides definitions for the terms utilized in this study, organized in alphabetical order for clarity and ease of reference.

Academic Advising: Describes the process of providing guidance and support to student-athletes in their academic pursuits, including course selection, degree planning, and academic progress monitoring (ASCA, 2019).

High School Counselors: Refers to the specific group of professionals who provide counseling and guidance services to students in high schools (ASCA, 2019).

High School Student-Athletes: Refers to individuals who are engaged in sports activities while pursuing their education at the high school level (NCAA, 2021).

Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Describes the cooperation and coordination between high school counselors, coaches, teachers, principals, and other stakeholders involved in supporting student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process, to provide comprehensive and holistic guidance (NCAA, 2021).

NCAA: Acronym for the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the governing body responsible for organizing and regulating college athletics in the United States (NCAA, 2021).

NCAA College Transition Process: Refers to the series of steps, requirements, and considerations involved in transitioning from high school athletics to participating in college sports programs governed by the NCAA (NCAA, 2021).

NCAA Eligibility: Refers to the requirements and criteria set by the NCAA that student-athletes must meet to be eligible to participate in college sports programs (NCAA, 2023).

Professional Development: Describes the ongoing learning, training, and growth opportunities available to high school counselors to enhance their knowledge, skills, and competencies in advising student-athletes (ASCA, 2019).

Retention and Graduation Rates: Describes the measures of success in college athletics, focusing on the percentage of student-athletes who remain enrolled and graduate from their respective colleges or universities (ASCA, 2019).

Transition Resources: Refers to the materials, tools, and information available to high school counselors to assist them in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process, including handouts, online materials, and professional networks (NCAA, 2023).

Limitations and Delimitations

This research study was subject to certain limitations and delimitations that may impact or restrict the methods and analysis of the research data. These limitations and delimitations were acknowledged to confirm that the study's findings are interpreted and applied appropriately and to avoid potential threats to validity. With regard to the limitations, the participants were limited to Georgia-certified high school counselors. The state of Georgia has unique standards for school counselor credentialing (ASCA, 2019; GaPSC, 2022). Certified school counselors in Georgia are required to make a passing score on the Georgia Assessment for the Certification of Educators, which may differ from those of other states (ASCA, 2019; GaPSC, 2022). Specific credentialing requirements, along with a regional focus on student-athlete advising or lack thereof, may impact and restrict the generalizability when applied to high school counselors in other states. Therefore, caution should be exercised when applying the study's findings to other states or regions with potentially different school counselor credentialing standards. With high school athletes now having the ability to profit off of their name, image, and likeness (NIL) in some states, the

Georgia High School Association status regarding NIL is currently under membership considerations (Keller, 2023). This means the Georgia school counselors' familiarity of the legislation impacting the monetization of student athletes may not be generalizable to other states. The perspectives and experiences shared by the participating high school counselors may also be influenced by their personal backgrounds, beliefs, and individual contexts (Paramo-Garfio, 2017; Sackett et al., 2018). Memories of past events as a former student-athlete or interactions with other professionals may be influenced by personal interpretations and selective memory. Participants' recollection of their experiences and knowledge related to advising student-athletes may be subject to recall bias (Smith, 2015). The study's focus on high school counselors' experiences in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process may also be limited by the researcher's personal background as a former school counselor and student athlete. This could introduce bias in interpreting themes and recognizing certain experiences, potentially impacting the objectivity of the study. The researcher's unique perspective might also limit the generalizability of findings to broader populations. To address these limitations, it is important for the researcher to acknowledge their bias, transparently discuss their personal experiences, and take steps to mitigate bias during data collection and analysis. Additionally, seeking diverse perspectives and applying rigorous research methods can help enhance the credibility and validity of the study's findings (Patton, 2014).

In regard to delimitations, the research was conducted within a specific time frame, limiting the exploration of how the experiences and knowledge of high school counselors may have evolved. The findings may not reflect the most recent developments or changes in the NCAA college transition process. Another delimitation is that the research exclusively used qualitative research methods, which typically focus on exploring specific phenomena in-depth

rather than aiming for generalizability to a larger population. Qualitative studies often involve a smaller sample size compared to quantitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2016). While qualitative research explores unique and detailed experiences, a small sample size may limit the diversity and representation of perspectives, potentially impacting the comprehensiveness of the findings (Smith, 2015). It is important for researchers and readers to consider these limitations and delimitations when interpreting the study's findings.

Organization of the Study

Chapter two of this study provides a comprehensive background on the NCAA college transition process, focusing on the involvement of school counselors. It explores the history of school counseling, the ASCA National Model, and the training of school counselors in various areas such as academic support, social-emotional development, crisis intervention, collaboration, and advocacy. The chapter also examines data analysis, program evaluation, leadership, and professional development for school counselors. Additionally, it delves into the history of the NCAA, the role of high school student-athletes, NCAA academic eligibility, and the student-athlete's transition to college. Theoretical frameworks, including ecological systems theory and social cognitive theory, are discussed. Finally, a summary of the literature highlights the importance of school counselors in facilitating a successful NCAA college transition for student-athletes.

Chapter three provides an overview of the research design, methodology, participants, and data collection procedures. It explains the rationale behind selecting phenomenology as the theoretical framework to explore the lived experiences and knowledge of high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process. It also discusses the key characteristics of qualitative research and how it aligns with the objectives of the research. The

dissertation provides a clear structure for understanding the research design, methodology, participant selection, data collection, analysis procedures, results, and discussion of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review section of this research study provides a comprehensive review of existing scholarly works, research studies, and relevant literature on the topic at hand. The transition process of high school student-athletes into college, particularly within the framework of NCAA regulations, is a complex phase that requires careful guidance and support from high school counselors (Geesa et al., 2019; Padilla, 2015; Paramo-Garfio, 2017). To effectively advise student-athletes on this transition, school counselors must possess a deep understanding of the unique challenges, opportunities, and regulations involved (Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013; Johnson et al., 2018). Therefore, it is essential to examine the existing literature to gain insights into the experiences and knowledge of high school counselors in this specific domain.

The literature review began with exploring the broader context of college transitions for student-athletes, examining the challenges they encounter and the importance of adequate support systems (Fletcher et al., 2003; Neal et al., 2015). The review dove into the role of high school counselors in facilitating this transition process and the specific knowledge they require to effectively guide student-athletes through the NCAA regulations and requirements (Antshel et al., 2016; McCalla, 2013; Petr & McArdle, 2012). The review explored previous studies and research findings that have investigated the experiences and perspectives of high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process (Carpenter, 2010; Cole, 2016; McCalla, 2013; Midkiff, 2014; Paramo-Garfio, 2017). This included an examination of the factors that influence school counselors' effectiveness in this role, such as their training, resources, and collaboration with other stakeholders (Boyland et al., 2019; Bryant, 2018; Poynton & Lapan, 2017; Stephenson, 2021). Furthermore, the literature review explored any existing gaps, limitations, or areas of contention in the current body of knowledge.

The History of School Counseling

The history of school counseling can be traced back to the early 20th century when the focus on students' academic and personal development began to emerge as a fundamental aspect of education (Gysbers, 2012; Sabella, 2006). The origins of school counseling can be seen in the guidance movement, which aimed to provide students with guidance and support to facilitate their educational and vocational choices (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). During the early 1900s, vocational guidance became a prominent aspect of school counseling (Zyromski et al., 2019). Influential figures such as Frank Parsons and Jesse B. Davis advocated for a systematic approach to help students explore career options and make informed decisions about their future (Carns & Carns, 1997; Gysbers, 2012). This vocational guidance movement aimed to align students' interests, abilities, and values with suitable career paths (Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Paolini, 2019).

In the mid-20th century, school counseling expanded its scope beyond vocational guidance to encompass social-emotional development (Gysbers, 2012; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Zyromski et al., 2019). This shift was influenced by changing societal needs and a growing recognition of the importance of addressing students' psychological and emotional well-being (Gysbers, 2012; Collins, 2014; Neal et al., 2015). School counselors began to provide support and guidance to help students navigate personal challenges, build resilience, and foster healthy relationships (Sabella, 2006; Whiston, 2002).

The development of school counseling as a profession gained further momentum in the 1950s and 1960s (Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Zyromski et al., 2019). Professional organizations, such as the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and the National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA), were established to advocate for the

recognition and advancement of school counseling as a specialized field. These organizations played a crucial role in promoting professional standards, ethical guidelines, and ongoing professional development for school counselors (Astramovich et al., 2013; Gysbers, 2012; Sabella, 2006).

Over the years, school counseling has continued to evolve and adapt to meet the changing needs of students and educational systems; the profession of school counseling has expanded to include academic guidance, college and career readiness, crisis intervention, conflict resolution, and promoting a positive school climate (ASCA, 2019; Curry & Milsom, 2021; Goodman-Scott, 2015; Wilder, 2018; Woods & Domina, 2014). School counselors have also become important advocates for equity and inclusivity, addressing the unique needs of diverse student populations and advocating for social justice within educational settings (Stone & Dahir, 2015; Neal et al., 2015).

In recent years, school counseling has increasingly emphasized a comprehensive, data-driven approach to student support (Hilts et al., 2019; Stephan & Rosenbaum, 2013). School counselors now utilize evidence-based practices, collaborate with stakeholders, and employ data analysis to inform their interventions and measure student outcomes (Geesa et al., 2019; Morton & Upton, 2020; Stone & Dahir, 2015; Zyromski et al., 2019). This shift towards data-informed decision-making has further strengthened the profession's credibility and effectiveness in supporting student success (Galassi, 2017; Stephenson, 2021). Overall, the history of school counseling reflects an ongoing commitment to promoting the holistic development of students (Gysbers, 2012; Sabella, 2006; Whiston, 2002). From its roots in vocational guidance to its current multifaceted role, school counseling has played a vital role in fostering academic

achievement, personal growth, and overall well-being among students (Galassi, 2017; Zyromski et al., 2019).

ASCA National Model

The ASCA National Model is a comprehensive framework developed by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) to guide the practice of school counseling and promote student success (ASCA, 2019; Sabella, 2006). It provides a blueprint for school counselors to design, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive, data-driven school counseling program that addresses the academic, career, personal, and social-emotional needs of all students (Gimbert et al., 2023; Gysbers, 2012; Hilts et al., 2019). The ASCA National Model is built upon four key components: define, manage, deliver, assess (ASCA, 2019).

The *define* component of the ASCA National Model (2019) comprises three sets of standards. These standards include the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, guiding students toward college and career readiness. Additionally, there are ethical standards for school counselors, ensuring professional conduct, and the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies, outlining the skills and knowledge needed for effective practice. Together, these standards define the school counseling profession, aiding counselors in developing, implementing, and assessing their programs to enhance student outcomes (ASCA, 2019; Boyland et al., 2019).

The *manage* component of the ASCA National Model (2019) emphasizes the essential management of the school counseling program for effective delivery. It equips school counselors with program-focused tools and planning strategies to shape and implement a productive school counseling program. This involves defining key components such as beliefs, vision, and mission statements to establish a clear program direction. The management process also includes

program planning using tools like school data summaries, annual student outcome goals, and action plans for classroom/group activities and addressing achievement gaps. Planning also extends to lesson plans, annual administrative conferences, time utilization, and calendars (both annual and weekly). Lastly, engaging an advisory council is part of this management approach, ensuring collaboration and effectiveness in program development and execution (ASCA, 2019; Falco & Shaheed, 2021).

The *deliver* component of the ASCA National Model (2019) involves the direct and indirect provision of developmentally suitable activities and services by school counselors to benefit students. These offerings contribute to students' growth in alignment with ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, positively impacting their academic performance, attendance, and behavior. Direct services include teaching, assessment and guidance, and counseling. Indirect services encompass consulting, collaborating with stakeholders, and making referrals to resources as needed. This comprehensive approach ensures students receive the support necessary for their holistic development and success (ASCA, 2019; Goodman-Scott et al., 2023; Geesa et al., 2019).

In the *assess* aspect of the ASCA National Model (2019), school counselors regularly evaluate their program's effectiveness to make improvements, track student development resulting from counseling efforts, and self-assess their own professional growth. This involves using tools like the School Counseling Program Assessment and Annual Results Reports to measure program impact, and participating in a yearly performance appraisal conducted by a qualified administrator. Additionally, counselors seek growth opportunities and assess their adherence to ASCA's professional standards through the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies Assessment. This assessment process ensures continuous

enhancement of the program and counselors' skills, aligning with the model's goal of delivering valuable support to students (ASCA, 2019).

The ASCA National Model provides a framework for school counselors to align their practice with national standards and evidence-based practices (ASCA, 2019). It guides the development of comprehensive school counseling programs that are responsive to the unique needs of students and contribute to their academic achievement, personal growth, and future success. By implementing the ASCA National Model, school counselors are better equipped to meet the diverse needs of students, create positive school climates, and make a meaningful impact on student outcomes (Geesa et al., 2019; Gysbers, 2012; Sabella, 2006).

School Counselors' Knowledge and Training

In terms of training, high school counselors are typically required to complete a master's degree program in school counseling or a related field (ASCA, 2019; GaPSC, 2022). These programs often include coursework in college and career counseling, educational planning, assessment and intervention strategies, and multicultural competence (Curry & Milsom, 2021; Stone & Dahir, 2015; Zyromski et al., 2019). School counselors may also engage in professional development activities, such as workshops, conferences, and webinars, to stay current with college admission trends, labor market information, and changes in career pathways (Paolini, 2019).

In Georgia, the credentialing process for school counselors involves a combination of education, experience, and certification (ASCA, 2019; GaPSC, 2022). The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) is responsible for setting the requirements and issuing credentials for educators, including school counselors, in the state (ASCA, 2019; GaPSC, 2022).

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission has a general process for earning and maintaining a school counseling certification in the state:

1. The first step is to complete a bachelor's degree program in counseling, psychology, education, or a related field. The degree should be from a regionally accredited institution (GaPSC, 2022).
2. Prospective school counselors in Georgia must have a master's degree in school counseling or a closely related field. The program must be approved by the GaPSC and meet the state's standards for school counselor preparation, and is recommended to be approved by The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (GaPSC, 2022).
3. School counselors in training need to gain practical experience in a school setting. This often involves completing a supervised internship or practicum, where they work directly with students under the guidance of a certified school counselor (GaPSC, 2022).
4. To obtain a professional certificate as a school counselor, candidates must pass the Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators (GACE) School Counselor assessment. This exam assesses knowledge and skills in areas such as counseling theories, assessment and evaluation, career development, and professional issues (GaPSC, 2022).
5. Once the educational and examination requirements are met, candidates can apply for certification through the GaPSC. The application process typically involves submitting transcripts, exam scores, verification of experience, and an application fee (GaPSC, 2022).

Historically, the knowledge and graduate-level training of school counselors regarding advising high school student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process was limited and often focused primarily on academic and vocational guidance (Carpenter, 2010; Cole, 2006; McCalla, 2013; Midkiff, 2014; Mitchell, 2021; Padilla, 2015; Paramo-Garfio, 2017). School counselors typically received training in areas such as career counseling, classroom lessons, social-emotional strategies, and college application processes (Astramovich et al., 2013; Collins, 2014; Curry & Milsom, 2021; Goodman-Scott, 2015). However, their understanding of the unique challenges and intricacies related to NCAA regulations and the college transition process for student-athletes was often inadequate (Carpenter, 2010; Cole, 2006; Gerlach, 2018).

In contrast, modern school counselors receive more emphasis in professional settings that recognize the specific needs and complexities of advising high school student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process (Gerlach, 2018; Schmidtknecht, 2023). Furthermore, modern graduate-level training programs for school counselors emphasize the importance of ongoing professional development (Stone & Dahir, 2015). Continuing education programs, for example, those offered at the American School Counselor Association Annual Conference, offer a range of knowledge and skill-building sessions to address the academic, social-emotional, and career aspects of students' lives (Geesa et al., 2019; Stone & Dahir, 2015). This includes professional development opportunities related to college athletics, NCAA eligibility requirements, recruitment processes, and the overall college transition experience for student-athletes (ASCA, 2019). School counselors are encouraged to stay updated with changes in NCAA regulations, college admissions processes, and best practices in advising student-athletes (Schmidtknecht, 2023; Vaughn & Smith, 2018). This commitment to lifelong learning allows modern school

counselors to continually enhance their knowledge and skills in supporting high school student-athletes during their transition to college athletics (Gerlach, 2018; August, 2020).

Modern school counselors are expected to have a deeper understanding of the NCAA regulations, academic eligibility requirements, and compliance guidelines that impact student-athletes (Schmidtknecht, 2023). It is important to note that while modern school counselors receive more comprehensive training, there may still be variations in the depth of their knowledge and experience based on individual professional development opportunities, mentorship, and practical experiences (Paolini, 2019; Sackett et al., 2018). Therefore, ongoing collaboration, networking, and access to relevant resources within the field of school counseling are imperative for school counselors to continually enhance their expertise in advising high school student-athletes (Gerlach, 2018; Zigelbaum, 2014 (a)).

Overall, the evolution of graduate-level training for school counselors has resulted in a need for a more informed and specialized approach to advising high school student-athletes (Gerlach, 2018; Schmidtknecht, 2023). Modern school counselors have more opportunities to become better equipped to navigate the intricacies of NCAA regulations, provide accurate information, and offer comprehensive support to student-athletes as they navigate the transition from high school to college athletics (Gerlach, 2018; Padilla, 2015; Paramo-Garfio, 2017).

The Role of the Modern School Counselor

The role of the modern school counselor has evolved significantly from its traditional focus on vocational guidance to encompass a broader range of responsibilities aimed at supporting students' academic, career, and social-emotional development (Havlik et al., 2019; Zyromski et al., 2019). Today, school counselors play a crucial role in promoting student success and well-being within educational settings (Wilder, 2018).

Academic Support

School counselors assist students in setting and achieving academic goals. They guide course selection, academic planning, and study skills development (Goodman-Scott, 2015; Paolini, 2019). They collaborate with teachers and administrators to identify and address academic challenges, and they help students navigate educational pathways that align with their interests, abilities, and aspirations (Boyland et al., 2019; Stephan & Rosenbaum, 2013). School counselors also play a vital role in supporting college and career readiness, assisting students with college applications, scholarship opportunities, and career exploration (Curry & Milsom, 2021; Paolini, 2019).

Social-Emotional Development

School counselors foster students' personal growth and social-emotional well-being (Gimbert et al., 2023). They provide individual and group counseling to address a range of personal issues, such as stress, anxiety, self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships (Collins, 2014; Falco & Shaheed, 2021; Zyromski et al., 2022). They promote social skills development, conflict resolution, and emotional resilience. School counselors also contribute to creating a positive and inclusive school climate by implementing programs that address bullying, diversity, and mental health awareness (Gimbert et al., 2023; Goodman-Scott et al., 2023).

Crisis Intervention

In times of crisis or emergencies, school counselors are on the front lines, providing immediate support and counseling to students and staff (Wells, 2022). They play a critical role in assessing and responding to crises, coordinating with relevant professionals and community resources, and implementing strategies to help individuals and the school community cope and recover (Alexander et al., 2022; Montague et al., 2020; Pincus et al., 2020).

Collaboration and Advocacy

According to Fletcher et al., 2003, establishing a partnership between university athletics department staff could serve as a practical initial step in creating a system that supports interventions aimed at aiding the student-athlete. School counselors collaborate with teachers, administrators, and parents to support student success (Goodman-Scott et al., 2022; Boyland et al., 2019). They participate in multidisciplinary teams to develop individualized education plans, address behavioral concerns, and implement interventions (Goodman-Scott et al., 2023).

According to Bryant, 2018, self-assessment instrumentation can be utilized by school counselors and principals in a collaborative effort to strengthen the implementation of a comprehensive counseling program. The instrumentation would involve the utilization of the annual principal/counselor agreement (ASCA, 2019), The Professional Identity Scale of Counseling (PISC), and the School Counselor Leadership Survey (SCLS) (Bryant, 2018). School counselors are leaders in the schools that serve as liaisons between students, families, and community organizations, fostering partnerships that enhance students' opportunities and well-being (Astramovich et al., 2013; Collins, 2014; Havlik et al., 2019; Goodman-Scott et al., 2022). They also advocate for students' needs, promoting equity, access to resources, and inclusivity within the school environment (Bryan et al., 2019; Havlik et al., 2019).

Data Analysis and Program Evaluation

Modern school counselors utilize data to inform their practice and measure the effectiveness of their interventions. They collect and analyze data to identify student needs, monitor progress, and assess the impact of their programs (Dahir et al., 2019). By using data-driven approaches, school counselors can tailor their support to individual and group needs,

identify trends, and make informed decisions to improve student outcomes (Mullen, Newhart et al., 2019).

Leadership and Professional Development

School counselors serve as leaders in their school communities (Bryan et al., 2019). They contribute to the development and implementation of school-wide initiatives and policies related to student well-being and success (Mullen, Stevens et al., 2019). They engage in ongoing professional development to stay abreast of best practices, research, and emerging trends in counseling and education (Bryant, 2018; Goodman-Scott et al., 2022; Greenspan et al., 2019). School counselors also take on advocacy roles at local, state, and national levels to promote the value and importance of school counseling (Bryan et al., 2019; Goodman-Scott et al., 2022; Morton & Upton, 2020).

Overall, the modern school counselor's role is dynamic and multifaceted (Blake, 2020). By providing academic, career, and social-emotional support, school counselors play a vital role in fostering students' holistic development, helping them navigate challenges, and empowering them to achieve their full potential (Goodman-Scott, 2015). The modern school counselor is a needed asset within educational settings, contributing to creating positive and inclusive environments that nurture students' growth and success (Blake, 2020; Bryan et al., 2019; Collins, 2014).

College and Career Readiness

School counselors in K-12 settings, with a primary focus on high school counselors, play a crucial role in promoting college and career readiness among students (ASCA, 2019; Curry & Milsom, 2021; Havlik et al., 2019; Woods & Domina, 2014). Their job responsibilities encompass a range of tasks aimed at helping students explore, plan, and prepare for their post-

secondary education and career pathways. The focus of high school counselors in college and career readiness is to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary for a successful transition into higher education or the workforce (ASCA, 2019; August, 2020; Gerlach, 2018). High school counselors assist students in developing academic plans that align with their interests, abilities, and post-secondary goals. They help students select appropriate courses, navigate graduation requirements, and explore advanced placement or dual enrollment options. They also provide academic monitoring and support to ensure students stay on track toward college and career readiness and to increase the chances of retention and graduation rates, the measures of success in college athletics. They focus on the percentage of student-athletes who remain enrolled and graduate from their respective colleges or universities (ASCA, 2019; Midkiff, 2014). They promote self-awareness, resilience, and decision-making skills to help students overcome barriers and make informed choices. They may also facilitate workshops on topics such as time management, study skills, stress management, and conflict resolution (Blake, 2020).

High school counselors help students navigate the college search process by providing information on different institutions, admission requirements, and financial aid opportunities. They assist students in preparing for college entrance exams, such as the SAT or ACT, and provide guidance on college applications, essays, and interviews. They may also facilitate college visits and host information sessions to help students make informed decisions about their college choices (Woods & Domina, 2014). School counselors can help students explore career options and develop career goals. They provide resources for career assessments, interest inventories, and job shadowing opportunities. They offer guidance on developing resumes, writing cover letters, and practicing interview skills. They also assist students in accessing

internships, work-based learning experiences, or vocational training programs (Curry & Milsom, 2021).

Overall, high school counselors have a multifaceted role in promoting college and career readiness (Havlik et al., 2019). They provide guidance, resources, and support to help students explore their options, plan their educational journey, and develop the skills necessary for a successful transition into higher education or the workforce. By focusing on college and career readiness, high school counselors contribute to students' long-term success and help shape their future pathways (Curry & Milsom, 2021).

The History of the NCAA

The history of the National Collegiate Athletic Association dates back to its founding in 1906 (NCAA, 2021). The NCAA is a voluntary organization that governs college athletics in the United States, setting rules and regulations for intercollegiate sports competitions. The NCAA was originally established as the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) in response to concerns about the safety and well-being of college football players. The IAAUS aimed to regulate and standardize rules for college football to encourage fair play and protect the interests of student-athletes (Petr & McArdle, 2012).

Over the years, the organization expanded its scope to encompass other sports and changed its name to the National Collegiate Athletic Association in 1910 (NCAA, 2021). The NCAA continued to evolve, developing rules and guidelines not only for athletics but also for academic eligibility, recruiting practices, and financial aid for student-athletes. One significant milestone in the history of the NCAA was the adoption of Title IX in 1997 (Melnick, 2018; Petr & McArdle, 2012). Title IX is a federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in educational institutions, including athletics (Blumenthal, 2022). The NCAA has played a vital role in

implementing and enforcing Title IX regulations within its member institutions. This landmark legislation led to increased opportunities for female athletes and the growth of women's sports programs across colleges and universities (Blumenthal, 2022; Melnick, 2018; Stevenson, 2007).

Throughout its history, the NCAA has faced various challenges and controversies. These include debates over amateurism, concerns about the exploitation of student-athletes, and issues related to academic integrity and the balance between athletics and academics (Antshel et al., 2016; Paramo-Garfio, 2017). The NCAA has continuously worked to address these challenges, often implementing reforms and initiatives to enhance student-athlete well-being, academic success, and the overall integrity of college sports (Petr & McArdle, 2012).

In recent years, the NCAA has faced scrutiny and calls for further reforms, particularly regarding student-athlete compensation and the governance structure of the organization. Various court cases, legislative proposals, and public discussions have prompted discussions about potential changes to the NCAA's policies and practices (Petr & McArdle, 2012).

The NCAA has also undergone significant changes in its administration and leadership structure. The association is composed of three divisions (Division I, Division II, and Division III) based on the size and resources of member institutions. Each division has its own governance system, with representatives from member schools responsible for decision-making processes (NCAA, 2021). In summary, the history of the NCAA is characterized by its evolution from an organization focused on regulating college football to a governing body overseeing a wide range of intercollegiate sports. Throughout its history, the NCAA has played a central role in shaping and managing college athletics, promoting fair play, and advocating for the well-being and academic success of student-athletes (NCAA, 2021; Petr & McArdle, 2012).

The Modern High School Student-Athlete

The modern high school student-athlete faces unique challenges, including the potential impact on their mental health (Moreland et al., 2018; Tabet, 2019). Research articles have shed light on the mental health experiences of student-athletes and the role of school counselors in providing support and assistance (Alexander et al., 2022; Koehler, 1995). Research has explored the experiences of student-athletes and their attitudes towards seeking help with services provided by counselors (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017; Ryan et al., 2018; Sackett et al., 2018; Tabet, 2019; Watson, 2006). According to López and Levy (2013), student-athletes commonly experience stress, anxiety, and pressure to perform academically and athletically. However, many of them face barriers to seeking help, such as a lack of awareness of available resources or concerns about stigma (Moreland et al., 2018; Tabet, 2019). The study highlighted the importance of counselors in creating a supportive and inclusive environment and providing accessible mental health services specifically tailored to the needs of student-athletes.

Another peer-reviewed journal (Neal et al., 2015) emphasized the pivotal role of school counselors in addressing the mental health concerns of student-athletes. The study highlighted the need for school counselors to develop specialized knowledge and skills to understand the unique challenges faced by student-athletes. It emphasized the importance of collaboration between school counselors, coaches, parents, and other stakeholders to create a comprehensive support system for student-athletes' mental well-being (Fletcher et al., 2003; Schmidtknecht, 2023).

Additionally, Ryan et al. (2018) explored the relationship between social support, mental health, and mental toughness among adolescent athletes. The findings indicated that perceived social support played a significant role in mitigating mental health issues and enhancing mental toughness in student-athletes (Tabet, 2019). School counselors were recognized as key

individuals who could provide social support, foster positive relationships, and promote mental well-being within the school context (Gimbert et al., 2023; Wilder, 2018; Zyromski et al., 2022).

These research articles highlight the significance of addressing the mental health needs of high school student-athletes and the essential role that school counselors play in supporting them. By understanding the unique challenges faced by student-athletes, raising awareness about mental health resources, and fostering a supportive environment, school counselors can help student-athletes navigate the pressures of academics, athletics, and personal well-being (Moreland et al., 2018; Schmidtknecht, 2023; Winters & Gurney, 2012; Zagelbaum, 2014 (a)).

The Relationship between the NCAA and High Schools

The relationship between the NCAA and high schools is a crucial partnership that serves to support and regulate the participation of student-athletes in college sports (Midkiff, 2014; Navarro et al., 2019). High schools play a fundamental role in preparing student-athletes for NCAA eligibility and facilitating their transition to collegiate athletics (Stahlke & Cranmore, 2021). One aspect of the relationship between the NCAA and high schools involves the implementation of NCAA eligibility requirements (McCalla, 2013). High schools are responsible for ensuring that student-athletes meet the academic and amateurism criteria set by the NCAA (Padilla, 2015). High school counselors, coaches, and administrators collaborate to guide student-athletes through the process of meeting NCAA eligibility standards, including core course requirements, minimum GPA thresholds, weighted grading scales, and up-to-date NCAA legislation (McCalla, 2013; NCAA, 2023).

High schools have access to the NCAA Eligibility Center, which evaluates and certifies the academic eligibility of student-athletes (NCAA, 2021). High school counselors can provide necessary academic records, transcripts, and other documentation to the Eligibility Center to

facilitate the certification process. They can also assist student-athletes in registering with the Eligibility Center and understanding the steps required for NCAA eligibility (NCAA, 2023). Furthermore, the NCAA and high schools share a commitment to maintaining the amateur status of student-athletes. The NCAA has established rules and regulations as a standard for student-athletes to maintain their amateur status while competing in high school sports (NCAA, 2021). High schools play a crucial role in monitoring and enforcing these rules, ensuring that student-athletes do not violate NCAA amateurism guidelines that could jeopardize their future eligibility (Petr & McArdle, 2012). As determined by the NCAA (2023), high school counselors should: “know which courses are NCAA-approved for having student-athletes enroll in them, assist student-athletes navigating the recruiting process, remind students to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center, and remind student-athletes to apply to the colleges and universities recruiting them.”

Additionally, the NCAA and high schools collaborate on matters related to recruiting and compliance. High school coaches and school counselors work closely with college coaches and NCAA compliance officers to confirm that the recruiting process follows NCAA rules and regulations (Hayden et al., 2017; McCalla, 2013; Schmidtknecht, 2023; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014). They guide student-athletes on the recruiting process, communication with college coaches, official visits, and the National Letter of Intent (NLI) signing process (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017). High school counselors can assist student-athletes with drafting emails to coaches and understanding the recruiting calendars.

The relationship between the NCAA and high schools extends beyond compliance. The NCAA values the development of student-athletes both athletically and academically (Tyranice et al., 2013). High schools play a pivotal role in fostering the holistic development of student-

athletes, providing guidance on academic success, character development, and life skills. They strive to create a supportive and nurturing environment that prepares student-athletes for the demands of collegiate athletics and academics (Lumpkin & Favor, 2013; Poynton & Lapan, 2017).

In conclusion, the relationship between the NCAA and high schools is imperative in ensuring the successful transition of student-athletes to collegiate sports (McCalla, 2013; Padilla, 2015; Paramo-Garfio, 2017). High schools collaborate with the NCAA to facilitate the fulfillment of eligibility requirements, monitor amateurism status, and regulate compliance with NCAA rules (Schmidtknecht, 2023). Moreover, high schools play a crucial role in the overall development of student-athletes, guiding them academically and personally as they pursue their athletic aspirations at the collegiate level (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017; Gerlach, 2018).

NCAA Academic Eligibility

NCAA academic eligibility for high school students transitioning to college is a major aspect of the NCAA College Transition Process (McCalla, 2013; Petr & McArdle, 2012). The eligibility requirements set by the NCAA establish that student-athletes meet certain academic standards to participate in collegiate sports. The NCAA has established specific academic eligibility criteria that student-athletes must meet to compete in Division I and Division II sports, such as high school coursework requirements. (NCAA, 2021).

To be academically eligible, high school students must fulfill the NCAA's core course requirements. These requirements vary between Division I and Division II, and they include a specified number of English, mathematics, science, social science, and other core subject courses (NCAA, 2021). It is fundamental for high school counselors to be well-versed in these requirements and guide student-athletes in selecting appropriate courses to meet eligibility

criteria (McCalla, 2013; Padilla, 2015; Paramo-Garfio, 2017; Schmidtknecht, 2023). In addition to core course requirements, student-athletes must achieve a minimum grade point average (GPA) in their core courses. The GPA requirements vary between Division I and Division II (NCAA, 2021; NCSA College Recruiting, 2022).

As of January 2023, the NCAA made a permanent change in its regulations, eliminating the necessity for first-year athletes in Divisions I and II to achieve a qualifying SAT or ACT score to partake in sports (Bauer-Wolf, 2023; NCAA, 2023). This adjustment was made as part of the NCAA's commitment to promoting racial equity, which involved a thorough examination of eligibility criteria for athletes, including admissions testing. The decision to remove the testing requirements initially arose in 2020, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in the closure of regular exam venues. This led NCAA officials to waive these mandates temporarily (Alexander et al., 2022; Kenfield, 2021; NCSA College Recruiting, 2023; Pincus et al., 2020). Colleges and universities may still require student-athletes to submit SAT or ACT scores as a part of their general admissions requirements.

Division III colleges and universities determine their own eligibility criteria for student-athletes (Bauer-Wolf, 2023). High school counselors need to stay updated on any changes or updates to NCAA academic eligibility requirements (McCalla, 2013; Padilla, 2015; Schmidtknecht, 2023; Southall et al., 2015). School counselors should maintain open lines of communication with student-athletes, parents, and the NCAA Eligibility Center to maintain accurate and timely submission of necessary documents and to address any concerns or questions that may arise (McCalla, 2013). By providing accurate information, guidance, and support, high school counselors can assist student-athletes in understanding and meeting the NCAA academic eligibility requirements (McCalla, 2013; Padilla, 2015; Paramo-Garfio, 2017). This helps

student-athletes navigate the college transition process smoothly and ensures they are on track to pursue their athletic and academic goals at the collegiate level (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017; Padilla, 2015). “Changes were made to the NCAA eligibility processes due to COVID-19. Some of those exceptions including nontraditional and distance learning which ended on September 1, 2023, and others such as the removal of the standardized test scores will continue moving forward,” according to NCAA, 2023.

Student-Athlete Transition to College

The transition process for high school student-athletes seeking to compete in college sports under the regulations of the NCAA involves several key components. These include finding an institutional match, navigating the recruitment process, understanding athletic scholarships, and signing a National Letter of Intent (NLI) (NCAA, 2021; NCSA College Recruiting, 2022; Zaarour & Bargal, 2023).

Finding an institutional match is an integral step for student-athletes (Gayles, 2009). It involves identifying colleges or universities that align with their academic, athletic, and personal goals. Factors such as academic programs, campus culture, location, and athletic competitiveness are considered when assessing potential institutions (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017; Curry et.al., 2021). Student-athletes often research and visit multiple schools, communicate with coaches, and evaluate how well a particular institution can support their academic and athletic aspirations (August, 2020).

The recruitment process is a vital aspect of the NCAA transition (NCSA College Recruiting, 2022). College coaches actively recruit prospective student-athletes based on their athletic abilities and potential contributions to their programs (Cole, 2006; Hayden et al., 2017; McCalla, 2013). Coaches may evaluate athletes' performances, attend games or competitions,

and communicate with them directly (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017). Recruits and their families may also visit campuses, meet with coaches, and learn more about the athletic programs.

Athletic scholarships play a significant role in the transition process (Lester, 2023; Zaarour & Bargal, 2023). Colleges and universities can offer financial aid packages, including athletic scholarships, to student-athletes based on their athletic abilities and potential contributions to the team. These scholarships can cover various expenses, such as tuition, room and board, textbooks, and other educational costs (Zaarour & Bargal, 2023). Understanding the types of athletic scholarships available, their terms, and the expectations associated with them is crucial for student-athletes and their families (Gerlach, 2018; Lester, 2023). Student-athletes and their families may also consider their university selection based on the potential of Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) monetization opportunities. When considering NIL opportunities, the aspiring student-athlete has the option to seek permission to be released from the obligations outlined in the National Letter of Intent. If this request is approved, the student can then participate in sports at another educational institution without any repercussions (Adams, 2022).

The National Letter of Intent is a binding agreement signed by student-athletes committing to attend a specific NCAA institution for one academic year. By signing the NLI, student-athletes indicate their intention to compete in the institution's athletic program (Lester, 2023; NCAA, 2023). The NLI signifies a formal commitment and is typically accompanied by the acceptance of an athletic scholarship offer from the institution (NCSA College Recruiting, 2022; Zaarour & Bargal, 2023). Once signed, student-athletes are expected to fulfill their commitment and enroll at the institution. It is possible for a student-athlete to change their mind and decommit after signing the NLI with the risk of losing one year of eligibility (Adams, 2022).

It's important to note that the NCAA has specific rules and regulations governing the recruitment process, athletic scholarships, and the signing of the NLI (NCAA, 2023; NCSA College Recruiting, 2022). These rules aim to maintain fair play, prevent undue influence, and encourage the well-being of student-athletes. Student-athletes and their families are encouraged to familiarize themselves with NCAA guidelines, communicate with high school coaches and school counselors, and seek guidance from NCAA compliance officers to navigate the transition process successfully (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017; Gerlach, 2018; Padilla, 2015). By navigating these steps thoughtfully and abiding by NCAA regulations, student-athletes can pursue their athletic and academic aspirations at the collegiate level (Gerlach, 2018; Midkiff, 2014).

Research Related to High School Counselors and Student-Athletes

Researchers have investigated various aspects related to school counselors and high school student-athletes, including counselors' perceptions and knowledge of services offered to student-athletes, school counseling and advising experiences, multicultural sports counseling competencies, and the transition from high school to college athletics.

Counseling and Advising Experiences

Paramo-Garfio (2017) examined the experiences of high school counselors when advising student-athletes on the NCAA college-going process. The study highlighted the challenges faced by counselors in navigating the complex requirements and regulations of college athletics. This study utilized qualitative research methods, specifically in-depth interviews, to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges that counselors encounter while advising students in this context. Researchers used purposive sampling to gather insights from high school counselors with diverse backgrounds and from different types of schools. This method involved selecting individuals who possess specific characteristics relevant to the

research. In this study, a small group of eight counselors from the Southern California area was chosen for in-depth interviews. The sample included counselors from four schools with a significant number of student-athletes entering NCAA programs and those from four schools where this was less common. This approach was deemed suitable for the research design, even though it may have limitations in terms of generalizability. The themes which emerged from the research were “1) Lack of formal training, 2) Counselors experience lack of formal role and responsibilities when working with student-athletes, 3) Limited communication between all stakeholders in the NCAA process, 4) No formal protocol or policy for advising student-athletes, 5) Parents and students managing expectations, 6) All on the same page with shared accountability, 7) Using personal connection to community and athletics to advise student-athletes” (Paramo-Garfio, 2017).

Sports Counseling Competency

Schmidtknecht (2023) provides implications for counseling high school student-athletes in a school setting, emphasizing the need for creating a supportive and inclusive environment. This literature review begins by addressing the counselor's role, followed by an examination of the academic eligibility criteria about which counselors must be knowledgeable. The review proceeds to explore academic considerations for student-athletes, including school and major selection, and then delves into the challenges these student-athletes may encounter upon entering college. These challenges encompass time management, mental health, and risky behavior. The author identifies research gaps, including the high school counselor's involvement in the recruiting process and an up-to-date understanding of how practicing counselors guide prospective student-athletes during their transition, along with the perception of this guidance from the student-athletes themselves (Schmidtknecht, 2023).

Early journal publications by Goldberg (1991) and Goldberg and Chandler (1995) contribute to the understanding of high school counselors' role in supporting student-athletes through sports counseling. These publications identify and address developmental challenges faced by student-athletes, including issues related to identity, personal competence, career development, and the transition to college. They emphasize the role of school counselors as key coordinators and consultants within the athlete-coach-parent dynamic (Goldberg, 1991). Goldberg and Chandler (1995) highlight the key developmental challenges encountered by student-athletes in interscholastic sports and provide guidance for counselors to support them in achieving age-appropriate developmental milestones. These journals emphasize the vital role of high school counselors in providing a comprehensive counseling program to support student-athletes, ultimately enhancing their academic and athletic success.

Multicultural Competency

Tinsley (2005) focused on the self-reported multicultural sports counseling competencies among professional school counselors and Play It Smart academic coaches. Play It Smart is a school program that utilizes sports involvement to foster the academic, personal, and career advancement of its participants. The research highlighted the significance of counselors possessing multicultural competencies to effectively address the diverse needs of student-athletes. This study compared the multicultural sports counseling competencies of professional school counselors and Play It Smart academic coaches who provide counseling services to high school student-athletes. The study's participants included professional school counselors (n=26), Play It Smart academic coaches with counseling degrees (n=9), and Play It Smart academic coaches without counseling degrees (n=62). The research aimed to connect multicultural counseling competencies, school counseling, and student-athletes, offering insights for

counseling professionals working with diverse students, including athletes. The findings may inform counselor education and training and benefit programs like Play It Smart by highlighting the importance of multicultural competence in addressing the unique needs of student-athletes.

Mitchell (2021) conducted a phenomenological study focusing specifically on school counselors' experiences with supporting African American male student-athletes. This qualitative study examined the academic support, provided by nine high school counselors in one southern Louisiana school district, for African American male high school student-athletes aspiring to play NCAA sports. Interviews were conducted with experienced counselors, revealing challenges like limited resources, heavy workloads, and insufficient NCAA support. Recommendations included providing counselors with NCAA-specific resources, and future research could explore NCAA support for high school counselors and their roles with these students (Mitchell, 2021).

Additionally, Harris et al. (2021) explored the interactions between school counselors and Black male student-athletes. It included nine participants selected through purposive and snowball sampling who were current or former student-athletes at high school and Division I levels. Through semi-structured interviews, the study identified factors influencing these interactions, such as perceptions of the counselor's role, the importance of support networks, and past experiences with counselors. The findings have practical implications for school counselor practice and policy, as well as potential avenues for further research.

Burnside (2013) conducted a qualitative study to explore the educational challenges faced by 20 African American males ranging from 17 to 40 years old who were considered high performing athletes in high schools. The participants were current community college students or former community college students who transferred and were currently enrolled in or graduated

from a Division 1 school. The findings revealed that Black student-athletes from urban public schools had a limited understanding of NCAA eligibility requirements and experienced inequitable access to college preparatory resources. School counselors were identified as the primary individuals responsible for college counseling and academic advising, providing guidance and support to students in their academic pursuits, including course selection, degree planning, and academic progress monitoring for students (ASCA, 2019). These studies emphasized the significance of counselors' counseling and advising experiences in supporting student-athletes, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, and highlighted the need for culturally competent programming.

Knowledge and Perceptions

Padilla (2015) and McCalla (2013) focused specifically on the knowledge of NCAA regulations and freshman eligibility requirements among high school counselors. Padilla (2015) examined high school counselors' knowledge and resources related to new NCAA academic eligibility rules. This study focused on high school counselors in California, specifically those working at underserved high schools that received Title 1 wide funding (schools with at least 40% low-income students). A survey was emailed to 755 high school counselors, and 79 completed it, resulting in a response rate of 10.46%. The majority of respondents were female (72%), aged 30-39, and primarily identified as Hispanic (49.35%) or white (35.06%). Their counseling experience ranged from one to forty-four years, with an average of 10.03 years. Some had athletic backgrounds as high school student-athletes, coaches, collegiate student-athletes, or athletic directors. The schools where counselors worked varied in size, counselor numbers, and caseloads. Most counselors worked at high schools with over a thousand students, and over half of the schools had four or more counselors. Caseloads for over 88% of counselors included more

than three hundred students (Padilla, 2015). The findings showed that most counselors lacked knowledge about NCAA rules, including GPA requirements and core courses. They also lacked resources from their schools, local universities, and the NCAA. Counselors expressed the need for information in a counselor-friendly format, improved communication from the NCAA, and free training opportunities to better assist potential NCAA student-athletes. In summary, the study revealed knowledge gaps and resource deficiencies among counselors, emphasizing the need for improved support and training (Padilla, 2015).

McCalla (2013) collected data through interviews and a pre-survey questionnaire involving coaches and counselors from four suburban Georgia high schools. Seventeen participants with five to thirty years of educational experience, including work with Division I-bound student-athletes, took part. The study found that coaches and counselors had some knowledge of NCAA requirements, but may have lacked updates on rules necessary for student-athletes' college admission and Division I participation. It suggested the need for more staff development to keep personnel informed of NCAA rule changes. The study also highlighted challenges faced by coaches and counselors in supporting student-athletes academically and athletically, emphasizing the importance of improved communication within the school district (McCalla, 2013).

Midkiff (2014) explored the connection between counselors' knowledge, perceptions, and involvement with student-athletes during the high school to college transition, emphasizing the significance of counselors' perceptions in supporting these students. This study addressed the issue of student-athletes lacking necessary skills for college success. The research explored the relationship between counselors' knowledge and their involvement with student-athletes. It also considered demographic factors. The study involved 72 Texas high school counselors and found

a significant link between counselor knowledge and involvement with student-athletes. However, perceptions did not show a significant connection. Demographics, including counselor race/ethnicity and graduate program status, also played a role. These findings may encourage improvements in counselor training and support for student-athletes in high schools.

Carpenter (2010) and Cole (2006) investigated counselors' perceptions of the services offered to student-athletes, shedding light on the perceived effectiveness and gaps in the support provided. Carpenter (2010) investigated how secondary school counselors perceived counseling services for student-athletes planning to transition to colleges or universities. Ten counselors were interviewed using open-ended questions and were selected for diversity in age, gender, experience, and ethnicity. Themes emerged for both counseling theory and practice. The primary concepts developed from the research were the need for increased collaboration, transitional programming, and specialization toward student-athletes, as well as an emphasis on academics, and lack of time and resources for counselors. The study found that counselors perceived a disparity in aligning their goals with the available resources and also perceived that students were underprepared for their transition to college.

Cole (2006) surveyed 104 high school counselors from across the U.S., and revealed several significant findings related to counselors' involvement with recruited student-athletes. It was observed that counselors with over 16 years of school counseling experience demonstrated greater knowledge about this student group, likely due to their exposure to recruited student-athletes during their careers. Additionally, counselors who were former student-athletes with extensive counseling experience reported higher knowledge levels about recruited student-athletes. Pearson correlations confirmed a strong relationship between counselors' knowledge of and involvement with recruited student-athletes, suggesting that counselors less knowledgeable

in this area tended to be less involved with these students. Despite the availability of NCAA roster positions, many counselors reported limited involvement with college recruiters and a lack of workshops, individual counseling, counseling groups, and professional development activities for student-athletes. Moreover, counselors commonly believed that female student-athletes were better prepared academically than their male counterparts, reflecting existing perceptions in the professional literature regarding the self-reliance and leadership qualities often associated with male student-athletes. Nonetheless, it was acknowledged that both male and female student-athletes faced typical developmental challenges alongside the unique challenges posed by their athletic commitments (Cole, 2006).

Lujan (2010) examined student athletes' understanding of the college recruiting process and the role of school counselors. The study involved a cross-sectional survey of 98 student-athletes from a southern Arizona high school; their knowledge of the college recruiting process and the role of school counselors was examined. The majority of participants were found to be inadequately informed about the college application process. Notably, there was a significant increase in recruiting knowledge among students expressing interest in college athletics between 9th and 11th grade and between 9th and 12th grade. Despite this, the students' perception of their counselors' helpfulness did not improve with time, as the school's counseling system involved counselor changes after 9th and 11th grades, preventing students from developing stronger bonds with a single counselor. This may account for the relatively consistent comfort level reported by the students throughout their high school years. The student-athletes also expressed an increase in comfort levels if the school counselor was knowledgeable about college athletics. These findings underscored the need for better counselor preparation to assist student-athletes in navigating the college application process (Lujan, 2010).

Lastly, Johnson et al. (2018) examined school counselors' perceptions of academic support for concussed students, emphasizing the need for counselors' awareness and knowledge of the specific challenges faced by injured student-athletes. This study aimed to investigate school counselors' perspectives on academic accommodations for student-athletes with concussions. A total of 669 school counselors from across 50 states participated in the Beliefs, Attitudes, and Knowledge of Pediatric Athletes with Concussion – School Counselor (BAKPAC-SC) survey. The majority of respondents agreed that concussions could impact students' academic performance and disagreed with the notion that there is excessive emphasis on concussions in sports. Attitudes and experiences were influenced by factors such as access to an athletic trainer, years of professional experience, and personal history of concussion. Overall, the findings indicate that school counselors generally hold positive attitudes regarding academic support for concussed student-athletes (Johnson et al., 2018). Collectively, these studies highlight high school counselors' knowledge and perceptions in providing appropriate guidance and support to student-athletes throughout their educational journey.

School Counseling Implications

Further research can contribute to the school counseling profession in several ways. The implications for school counseling include a deeper understanding of the experiences and knowledge of high school counselors in advising student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process (Goldman, 1994; Padilla, 2015). This increased understanding can inform the development of more effective counseling strategies and interventions for this specific population. The research could further identify the unique challenges and needs faced by high school counselors when supporting student-athletes through the NCAA college transition. By shedding light on these specific issues, this research could help the profession recognize areas

where additional training, resources, or support may be necessary. The findings of the research can contribute to the establishment of best practices in advising student-athletes. High school counselors can benefit from evidence-based recommendations and insights that can guide their interactions with student-athletes, ensuring the student-athletes receive the necessary support and guidance for a successful transition (Johnson et al., 2018; Navarro et al., 2019). Further professional development opportunities for school counselors focusing on enhancing their knowledge and skills in advising student-athletes may be considered as a result (Cole, 2006; McCalla, 2013; Padilla, 2015). It can serve as a catalyst for workshops, training programs, or conferences that address specialized topics and challenges of the student-athlete population.

The study highlights the importance of understanding the experiences of high school counselors. School counselors can adopt a similar approach in their practice by actively engaging with student-athletes and seeking to understand their perspectives, concerns, and aspirations (Zagelbaum, 2014 (b)). An empathetic and person-centered approach can foster stronger relationships with student-athletes and create a safe and supportive environment for discussing their college transition plans (Sorkkila et al., 2017; Zyromski et al., 2022). School counselors can assist student-athletes in identifying colleges or universities that align with their academic, athletic, and personal goals (Cole, 2006). They can provide resources, guidance, and information on NCAA guidelines, academic programs, eligibility requirements, and scholarship opportunities to help student-athletes make informed decisions during the college selection process (Curry & Milsom, 2021; McCalla, 2013; Paolini, 2019).

Moreover, the study emphasizes the role of interdisciplinary collaboration, the cooperation and coordination between school counselors, coaches, parents, and other stakeholders in supporting student-athletes (Boyland et al., 2019; Fletcher et al., 2003; Geesa et

al., 2019; NCAA, 2021). School counselors can actively engage with these individuals to establish a comprehensive support system for student-athletes. This collaborative approach can facilitate smoother transitions and provide a holistic network of support for student-athletes (Dahir et al., 2019; Morton & Upton, 2020).

This study may have relevance for school counselor education programs as it brings attention to the significance of engagement with student-athletes and sports counseling programming (Goldberg & Chandler, 1995; Navarro et al., 2019; Tinsley, 2005). School counselor education programs could potentially integrate concepts related to the NCAA and college transition into their curriculum for school counselor preparation. Specific areas within school counselor preparation programs where this information could be incorporated include the specialized field of sports counseling, career development, group counseling and dynamics, practicum, and internship (Goldberg & Chandler, 1995; Paramo-Garfio, 2017; Tinsley, 2005).

In summary, this research study has important implications for school counseling practice and training programs. School counselors can utilize the findings to enhance their understanding of the NCAA college transition process for student-athletes and tailor their counseling approaches accordingly. By providing guidance, support, and collaboration, school counselors can play a pivotal role in promoting a successful college transition and the overall well-being of student-athletes (Sackett et al., 2018; Vaughn & Smith, 2018; Woods & Domina, 2014). The research can contribute to the school counseling profession by expanding knowledge, identifying needs, informing best practices, fostering professional development, and supporting advocacy efforts in advising student-athletes.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study can be drawn from various relevant theories and concepts. Theoretical frameworks used in this study include ecological systems theory and social cognitive theory.

Ecological Systems Theory

This theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, emphasizes the interconnectedness of various systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem) that influence an individual's development and experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 2000; Rogers & Cooper, 2020). The ecological systems theory can help explain how the interactions between the high school counselor, student-athletes, families, schools, and broader societal factors impact the counseling process and the success of student-athletes in the NCAA college transition (Carns & Carns, 1997; Goodman-Scott et al., 2023; Rogers & Cooper, 2020). The ecological systems theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex interactions and influences that shape the experiences and outcomes of individuals within their social environments (Bronfenbrenner, 2000; Rogers & Cooper, 2020). Applied to the context of high school counselors' experience and knowledge in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process, the ecological systems theory offers insights into how various systems impact the counseling process and the success of student-athletes (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017; Carns & Carns, 1997; Gerlach, 2018; Midkiff, 2014; Poynton & Lapan, 2017).

At the *microsystem level*, the interactions between the high school counselor, student-athletes, and their families play a crucial role (Goodman-Scott et al., 2023; Rogers & Cooper, 2020). The school counselor's guidance and support, along with the family's involvement and expectations, can significantly influence the decisions, motivations, and well-being of student-athletes (Fletcher et al., 2003). The school counselor-family partnership can foster effective

communication, provide necessary resources, and promote a supportive environment (Rogers & Cooper, 2020).

The *mesosystem* encompasses the interactions between different microsystems, such as the high school and the broader school community (Goodman-Scott et al., 2023; Rogers & Cooper, 2020). The interdisciplinary collaboration between school counselors, coaches, teachers, and administrators within the school setting is vital for creating a cohesive support system for student-athletes (Boyland et al., 2019; Fletcher et al., 2003). Effective coordination and communication among these stakeholders can support meeting the academic, athletic, and social needs of student-athletes,, facilitating a successful transition to college (Gerlach, 2018; Midkiff, 2014).

The *exosystem* includes societal factors that indirectly impact the counseling process and the success of student-athletes (Rogers & Cooper, 2020). These factors may include policies and regulations related to college athletics, the availability of resources and opportunities for student-athletes, and the overall cultural and societal attitudes toward sports and academics (Cosh & Tully, 2013; Melnick, 2018; Padilla, 2015). Understanding these broader influences helps school counselors navigate external challenges, advocate for necessary support, and provide contextually relevant guidance to student-athletes (Fletcher et al., 2003, Goodman-Scott et al., 2022; Paramo-Garfio, 2017).

The *macrosystem* represents the larger cultural and social contexts that shape the experiences of student-athletes and high school counselors (Rogers & Cooper, 2020). This may include societal values, beliefs, and expectations related to academic achievement, sports, and college education (Gayles, 2009; Sackett et al., 2018). Awareness of these cultural influences allows school counselors to tailor their approach and support to align with the specific needs and

aspirations of student-athletes within their broader social context (Fletcher et al., 2003; Goodman-Scott et al., 2023).

Finally, the *chronosystem* acknowledges the dynamic nature of systems and the importance of considering developmental changes (Rogers & Cooper, 2020). The NCAA college transition process is not a static event, but a journey that unfolds over the course of a student-athlete's high school years. Understanding the timing and developmental milestones within this process allows school counselors to provide timely and relevant guidance, addressing the changing needs and challenges that arise at different stages (Goodman-Scott et al., 2023; Rogers and Cooper, 2020).

In summary, the Ecological Systems Theory can provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the interactions and influences between the high school counselor, student-athletes, families, schools, and broader societal factors in the context of NCAA college transition (Rogers & Cooper, 2020). By considering these multiple systems and their interconnections, school counselors can develop a holistic understanding of the counseling process and tailor their support to facilitate the success of student-athletes throughout their transition to college athletics (Carns & Carns, 1997).

Social Cognitive Theory

This theory, proposed by Albert Bandura, focuses on the reciprocal relationship between individuals, their behavior, and the environment (Bandura, 2002). It highlights the role of observational learning, self-efficacy, and personal agency in shaping individuals' thoughts, actions, and outcomes. Social cognitive theory can help explore how high school counselors' beliefs, self-efficacy, and interactions with student-athletes influence their experiences and effectiveness in advising on the NCAA college transition process (Mensah et al., 2023).

Social Cognitive Theory offers valuable insights into how high school counselors' beliefs, self-efficacy, and interactions with student-athletes influence their experiences and effectiveness (Ion et al., 2022). By applying this theory, we can explore the cognitive processes, social interactions, and individual factors that shape school counselors' attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes in their role as advisors to student-athletes (Bandura, 2002; Mensah et al., 2023).

Beliefs play a main role in the counseling process, and Social Cognitive Theory highlights the importance of school counselors' self-beliefs in their abilities to guide and support student-athletes effectively. School counselors with high self-efficacy beliefs in advising student-athletes are more likely to approach their role with confidence, enthusiasm, and a proactive mindset (Ion et al., 2022). They believe in their capacity to provide meaningful assistance and facilitate successful transitions for student-athletes. On the other hand, school counselors with low self-efficacy may doubt their abilities, leading to reduced engagement and effectiveness in their advisory role. Exploring school counselors' self-efficacy beliefs can shed light on the factors that contribute to their confidence or insecurities in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process (Ion et al., 2022).

Interactions between high school counselors and student-athletes also shape the counseling process. Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the role of observational learning and modeling in shaping behavior (Bandura, 2002). Student-athletes can observe and internalize the behaviors and attitudes of their school counselors, which can influence their own beliefs, motivations, and actions during the NCAA college transition (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; St. Quinton, 2022). School counselors who demonstrate strong communication skills, empathy, and a supportive approach are likely to establish positive relationships with student-athletes, fostering trust and effective collaboration (Ion et al., 2022). Conversely, ineffective communication, a lack

of understanding, or a dismissive attitude can hinder the counseling process and diminish the impact of school counselors' advice. Examining school counselors' interactions with student-athletes can provide insights into the dynamics that contribute to successful advising and promote positive outcomes (Goldman, 1994; Mensah et al., 2023).

Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the importance of reciprocal determinism, which recognizes that individuals' behaviors are influenced by both personal factors and their social environment (Bandura, 2002). In the context of high school counselors advising student-athletes, this theory suggests that school counselors' beliefs and self-efficacy can be influenced by the feedback and reactions they receive from student-athletes, as well as the support or challenges they encounter in their counseling role (Ion et al., 2022). Positive feedback and successful outcomes with student-athletes can enhance school counselors' beliefs in their abilities, reinforcing their self-efficacy and motivation to continue providing effective guidance (Arora, 2015; Mensah et al., 2023; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Conversely, negative experiences or perceived lack of impact may diminish school counselors' beliefs and feelings of self-efficacy. Exploring the reciprocal nature of the school counselor-student-athlete relationship can help identify strategies to enhance school counselors' beliefs and self-efficacy, fostering more effective advising practices (Mensah et al., 2023).

In summary, Social Cognitive Theory can be applied when considering school counselors' beliefs, self-efficacy, and the reciprocal nature of their interactions; we can gain insights into the factors that contribute to effective advising and the development of strategies to enhance school counselors' efficacy and support for student-athletes (Ion et al., 2022; Mensah et al., 2023). This understanding can inform professional development initiatives, training

programs, and interventions that promote school counselors' effectiveness in guiding student-athletes through the NCAA college transition process (Morton & Upton, 2020).

These theoretical frameworks can provide a basis for understanding and analyzing the experiences and knowledge of high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process. By employing a theoretical framework, the study can structure the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the findings within a broader conceptual framework, enhancing the theoretical and practical implications of the research (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

Literature Review Summary

The literature review highlighted the significance of understanding the experiences and knowledge of high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process. It emphasized the importance of school counselors having a comprehensive understanding of NCAA guidelines, academic requirements, athletic scholarships, and the recruitment process. Also emphasized was the importance of collaboration between school counselors, coaches, parents, and other stakeholders in supporting student-athletes during the NCAA college transition (Boylard et al., 2019; Fletcher et al., 2003). This collaborative approach helps student-athletes receive comprehensive guidance, support, and resources, enabling them to make informed decisions and thrive academically and athletically (Goldberg, 1991).

In conclusion, the literature review highlighted the need for school counselors to possess knowledge of NCAA guidelines, facilitate an institutional match, provide mental health support, and engage in collaboration with various stakeholders. By integrating these findings into their practice, school counselors can effectively guide and support student-athletes, ultimately contributing to their successful transition to college and overall well-being (Fletcher et al., 2003).

Further research in this area is encouraged to deepen our understanding and improve the quality of support provided to student-athletes during this significant life transition.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The methodology section of this paper discussed the various aspects of the research approach and procedures that were employed in the study. It provided a comprehensive account of the methods and techniques chosen, along with the reasoning behind their selection. This section covered several essential elements, starting with the research design, which outlined the overall framework or structure. It then dove into the research questions that guided the investigation and provided a context for the research. Furthermore, it described the participants and sampling strategy, and included details about the sample characteristics and the method for participant selection. The section also explained the data collection methods that were utilized, such as surveys, interviews, observations, or experiments, and addressed measures taken to ensure data reliability and validity. Additionally, it outlined the data analysis procedures, including the qualitative analysis techniques; ethical considerations, such as informed consent and participant rights, were also addressed in this section. The methodology section offered sufficient detail and clarity, enabling other researchers to understand and potentially replicate the study.

Research Design Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore the firsthand experiences and knowledge of high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the process of transitioning to NCAA colleges. The phenomenological approach was selected because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of the school counselors' subjective perspectives and the underlying essences of their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Mitchell, 2021; Sackett et al., 2018). A constructivist worldview is based on the idea that experiences shape a learner's knowledge and construct a subjective truth

(Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Data collection for this study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with high school counselors who have experience in advising student-athletes. Semi-structured interviews were used to have a flexible yet focused approach, which allowed for probing questions and in-depth discussions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Rossetto, 2014).

The sample population included high school counselors from various schools in the state of Georgia, representing diverse backgrounds, expertise, and geographical locations. Patterns and themes were identified and analyzed within the collected interview data (Rossetto, 2014). This approach involved systematically organizing and categorizing the data to capture the school counselors' experiences and knowledge.

The findings from this study contributed to a deeper understanding of the experiences and knowledge of high school counselors in guiding student-athletes through the NCAA college transition process. The potential insights gained from this study informed the development of effective strategies and interventions to better support student-athletes in their transition to college athletics. The interview questions were as follows:

1. What are the lived experiences of high school counselors when advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process?
2. What are the key challenges and obstacles experienced by high school counselors in supporting student-athletes throughout the NCAA college transition process?
3. What experiences do high school counselors have to acquire and develop their knowledge and understanding of the NCAA college transition process for student-athletes?

4. What personal recommendations can be made to enhance the training and professional development of high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process?
5. What experience do high school counselors have with utilizing strategies and resources to advise and support student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process?

Sampling

The sample for this study included (N=9) high school counselors in Georgia who academically support student-athletes. The sampling strategy used was purposive sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This approach was chosen to select participants who possessed a wealth of experience and knowledge in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process. The researcher gathered a diverse range of perspectives by selecting high school counselors from various schools, representing different backgrounds, in the state of Georgia. The high schools represented reflect varying degrees of athletic priority. This diversity in the sample was crucial in capturing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Smith, 2015).

A combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques was used to identify potential participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Snowball sampling occurred when existing participants were asked to recommend other future participants who could provide valuable insights into the phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Flick, 2022). The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation, where new information and insights cease to emerge from the interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Participants were recruited until a sufficient amount of experience had been obtained to answer the research questions adequately

and saturate the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The researcher aimed to promote the inclusion of school counselors positioned within the schools to advise student-athletes by actively seeking out certified high school counselors with varying levels of expertise in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process.

Hypothesis

Based on prior research, it was hypothesized that high school counselors' experience and knowledge in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process would vary significantly based on current roles and responsibilities, years of experience, and emphasis on sports within the school (Cole, 2006; McCalla, 2013; Midkiff, 2014; Padilla, 2015). It was expected that some school counselors would possess extensive experience, in-depth knowledge of NCAA regulations, and effective strategies for supporting student-athletes during the transition. Conversely, other school counselors may exhibit limited experience and knowledge in this specific area, potentially leading to challenges and gaps in their ability to provide comprehensive guidance (Mitchell, 2021).

Instrumentation

Appropriate instrumentation was selected to collect data that would align with the research objectives and capture the school counselors' experiences and knowledge (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The primary instrument that was used in this study was semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allowed for a flexible yet focused approach to data collection and enabled the exploration of the school counselors' experiences, perspectives, and insights related to advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Rossetto, 2014). The interviews were designed to elicit detailed information

from the participants and allowed them to share their expertise, challenges faced, effective strategies utilized, and recommendations for improvement (Rossetto, 2014).

To establish consistency and comprehensiveness, an interview protocol guide was used by the researcher to collect comments and observations during the interview, additional topics discussed, documents obtained, the contact information of counselor referrals, and post interview comments and observations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The interview protocol guide served as a framework for the interviews, ensuring that all relevant topics were documented while allowing for flexibility to explore emerging themes and follow up on participants' responses (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interview process was audio-recorded with the participants' consent to verify an accurate depiction of the discussions. The recordings were referred back to during the data analysis phase and facilitated a detailed analysis of the interview data (Rossetto, 2014; Smith 2015). The use of audio recordings and notes verified the accuracy of the data, contributing to a robust analysis of the school counselors' experiences and knowledge in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures were employed to gather relevant and comprehensive information from the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A purposive sampling strategy was used to identify and recruit high school counselors with experience in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process. Recruitment efforts involved reaching out to professional networks, educational organizations, and relevant associations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Snowball sampling was also utilized, where existing participants were asked to recommend other school counselors who could contribute valuable insights (Watson, 2006; Watson & Kissinger, 2007).

Georgia high school counselors were approached using various methods for recruitment. The primary approach was through participation in the 2023 American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Conference held in Atlanta, GA. During the conference, the researcher collected contact information from attendees during an NCAA Hot Topics breakout session. Subsequently, emails were sent to eight Georgia school counselors who had been identified through the ASCA conference. Of these, six responded to the email, and four completed the interview process. Additionally, two Georgia school counselors, referred by participants in the initial interviews, also took part in the study. The second recruitment method involved reaching out to potential participants by sending emails to their school email addresses. Approximately 105 Georgia school counselors were contacted in this manner. Four counselors responded to these emails, and three of them went on to complete the interview process. Additionally, information about the study was shared on both the ASCA and the Georgia School Counselor Association (GSCA) message boards to reach a wider audience.

Before participating in the study, all potential participants were provided with detailed information about the research purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Informed consent forms were obtained which outlined the voluntary nature of participation and the confidentiality measures in place. Participants were allowed to ask questions and clarify any concerns before providing their consent (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method of data collection (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). These interviews were conducted via telephone. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission to collect the data.

Detailed and confidential notes were maintained throughout the data collection phase. Data collection continued until data saturation was achieved. Saturation was determined when

the information gathered provided sufficient depth and breadth of data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Comprehensive and meaningful information was obtained from the high school counselors through the use of data collection methods, such as informed consent forms, semi-structured interview questions, detailed notes, and an interview protocol guide (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The procedures facilitated an in-depth exploration of the school counselors' experiences and knowledge in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process, contributing to the validity of the findings.

Data Analysis

The data analysis involved identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns and themes within the qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Miles et al., 2014). Open coding was used to identify and label meaningful segments of the data related to the research objectives (Patton, 2014). This involved highlighting significant statements, ideas, or concepts that emerge from the interviews. Detailed notes were taken during this process to capture their thoughts and reflections.

Open coding followed by axial coding was used to disaggregate the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This step involved grouping and categorizing the initial codes into broader themes or categories. The relationships between the codes were examined and connections and themes that emerged within the dataset were explored. The categories were revised through discussions and constant comparison of the data. Selective coding was employed, focusing on the most prominent themes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The relationships between the themes, overarching patterns, and key findings were identified. The research was supported with verbatim quotes from the interviews, ensuring transparency and allowing for direct connection to

the participants' voices. The findings were presented in a coherent and organized manner, highlighting the key themes, subthemes, and supporting evidence.

Validity and Reliability

Various strategies were employed, such as member checking and peer debriefing, to enhance internal validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Member checking involved sharing the preliminary findings with participating school counselors to verify the accuracy and authenticity of the interpretations. Peer debriefing involved seeking input from other researchers or experts in the field to validate the emerged themes and interpretations (Rossetto, 2014). While phenomenological research focuses on understanding individual experiences, efforts were made to enhance the transferability or generalizability of the findings (Smith, 2015). A comprehensive and clear depiction of the research methodology, sampling approach, and data collection procedures was offered to assist readers in evaluating the relevance and applicability of the findings to comparable settings (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Detailed and systematic records of the research process were upheld to bolster the reliability of the findings. This included documenting the research design, data collection methods, and analytical process. By providing clear details, other researchers can evaluate and potentially replicate the study's procedures to assess the consistency and dependability of the results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Established qualitative research practices were adhered to, which included conducting confidential interviews and maintaining consistency in data collection procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). These measures aimed to enhance the consistency of data collection and analysis, minimizing potential biases or variations in interpretations. The researcher acknowledged their own biases and assumptions throughout the research process. This practice helped to promote transparency and minimize potential researcher

biases that could affect the validity and reliability of the findings (Patton, 2014). Strategies were integrated with the goal of improving the validity and reliability of the findings, thereby enhancing trustworthiness and credibility.

Ethical Considerations

Several ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. Before participating in the study, all high school counselors were provided with clear and comprehensive information regarding the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The high school counselors were given the opportunity to ask questions and provide voluntary informed consent to participate. To ensure confidentiality, all personal identifying information of the participating high school counselors was kept strictly confidential (Blee & Currier, 2011). Pseudonyms or participant codes were used to maintain anonymity throughout the research process (Walker, 2007). The researcher maintained a respectful and professional attitude toward the high school counselors. The researcher maintained a respectful and professional attitude toward the high school counselors. The school counselors' expertise and experiences in advising student-athletes were acknowledged and respected. It was ensured that the participants' perspectives were faithfully represented, and their voices were heard without any distortion or misinterpretation (Walker, 2007).

The specific research regarding school counselors' experience and knowledge of the NCAA college transition process posed a low risk. Potential risks involved in discussing sensitive topics related to student-athletes' mental health were acknowledged (Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 2008). A supportive environment was established by ensuring participants' confidentiality and emphasizing that school counselors should only share information they were comfortable disclosing (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The information gathered contributed to the

body of knowledge on effective practices of school counselors in advising student-athletes during the college transition process.

Appropriate ethical permissions were obtained through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or a similar ethical review committee (Blee & Currier, 2011). The research design, procedures, consent forms, and data handling protocols were reviewed and approved to ensure compliance with ethical standards and regulations (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The rights and well-being of the high school counselors who participated were safeguarded while ensuring the integrity and credibility of the research findings through the consideration of ethical matters.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to report the research outcomes derived from structured interviews conducted with high school counselors. These in-depth interviews were centered on delving into the experiences of high school counselors in advising student-athletes regarding the NCAA college transition process. This study was guided by the following main research question: What are the lived experiences of high school counselors when advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process? All of the following research questions played a crucial role in eliciting the insightful narratives of the school counselors:

1. What are the lived experiences of high school counselors when advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process?
2. What are the key challenges and obstacles experienced by high school counselors in supporting student-athletes throughout the NCAA college transition process?
3. What experiences and training do high school counselors have to acquire and develop their knowledge and understanding of the NCAA college transition process for student-athletes?
4. What experience do high school counselors have with utilizing strategies and resources to advise and support student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process?
5. What personal recommendations can be made to enhance the training and professional development of high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process?

Through carefully structured in-depth interviews, high school counselors were prompted with questions designed to elicit their thoughts, emotions, and specific experiences working with

aspiring college student-athletes. A machine transcription service company called Temi (2023) was used to convert the audio recordings into text and transcribe the interviews. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of individuals and schools. The subsequent section presents participants' demographic information, providing essential context for the findings.

Study Participant Demographics

The participants in this study exhibited a wide array of demographic backgrounds, job titles, and affiliations with athletics. In the forthcoming table, participants' details will encompass the number of years they've worked with student-athletes in a counseling capacity, their job titles, the type of high school institution where they were employed, the level of emphasis placed on athletics within their institutions, the counties in which they worked, and whether they had previous experience as student-athletes themselves. This comprehensive information will provide valuable context to better grasp the perspectives and experiences of the study participants.

Table 1
Study Participant Demographics

<u>Participant Code Name</u>	<u>Years Counseling Student Athletes</u>	<u>Job Title</u>	<u>Type of Institution</u>	<u>Institution Emphasis on Athletics</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Former Athlete?</u>
P1	7 years	Head School Counselor/ Athletic Counselor	Public 9-12, Middle Class, Suburban, Northeast - Metro Atlanta	Medium-High	Gwinnett	Yes, Division 1
P2	3 years (29 years as a school counselor)	School Counselor	Public 9-12, Middle Class, Rural, Atlantic - Coastal Georgia	High	Liberty	Yes, High School
P3	9 years	School Counselor/ NCAA Dept. Counselor	Public 9-12, Lower Class - Title 1, Suburban - Northeast Metro Atlanta	Medium	Gwinnett	No
P4	8 years (27 years as a school counselor)	School Counselor/ Athletic Advisor	Public 9-12, Upper Class, Suburban, Northeast - Metro Atlanta	High	Gwinnett	No
P5	29 years	School Counselor	Private 9-12, Middle Class, Suburban - Atlantic Coastal Georgia	High	Chatham	Yes, High School

Table 1 – continued.

<u>Participant Code Name</u>	<u>Years Counseling Student Athletes</u>	<u>Job Title</u>	<u>Type of Institution</u>	<u>Institution Emphasis on Athletics</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Former Athlete?</u>
P6	15 years	School Counselor	Private Religious, P-12, Middle Class, Rural - West Central Georgia	Medium	Troup	No
P7	2 years	College Counselor	Private Religious, P-12, Upper Class, Suburban, Northeast - Metro Atlanta	High	Gwinnett	Yes, High School
P8	22 years	School Counseling Dept. Chair/ NCAA Liaison for Gwinnett County Schools	Public 9-12, Upper Class, Suburban, Northeast - Metro Atlanta	High	Gwinnett	Yes, Division 1
P9	12 years	Lead School Counselor	Public 9-12, Middle Class, Suburban, Southwest - Metro Atlanta	High	Douglas	No

P1, identified as a high school counselor with seven years of experience, holds the role of Head School Counselor and Athletic Counselor in a public 9-12 institution situated in the suburbs of Gwinnett County, within the Northeast-Metro Atlanta region. The institution places a medium to high emphasis on athletics. P1 has experience as a former Division 1 college athlete.

P2 emerged as a school counselor with a 29-year tenure in the field of education, including three years of counseling for student-athletes. P2 served as a School Counselor in a public 9-12 institution in the rural setting of Atlantic-Coastal Georgia, within Liberty County. Their institution exhibits a high emphasis on athletics. P2 has a history as a former high school athlete.

P3 has nine years of service as a School Counselor and NCAA Department Counselor within a public 9-12 institution. This institution is situated in the suburbs of Northeast Metro Atlanta, Gwinnett County, and it serves a lower-class, Title 1 student demographic. The institution places a medium level of emphasis on athletics. P3 does not have a personal history as a former athlete.

P4 has a 27-year tenure in the field of education, including eight years dedicated specifically to counseling student-athletes. Currently holding the role of School Counselor and Athletic Advisor, P4 serves within a public 9-12 institution situated in the suburbs of Northeast Metro Atlanta, Gwinnett County. The institution serves an upper-class student demographic and places a high emphasis on athletics. P4 does not have a personal history as a former athlete.

P5 has a 29-year tenure as a School Counselor. P5 serves within a private 9-12 institution in the middle-class suburban setting of Atlantic Coastal Georgia, Chatham County. Their institution places a high emphasis on athletics. P5 has a personal history as a former high school athlete.

P6 brings 15 years of experience to their role as a School Counselor. They currently serve in a private religious institution encompassing grades P-12, located in the middle-class, rural landscape of West Central Georgia's Troup County. Their school maintains a medium level of emphasis on athletics. P6 does not have a personal history as a former athlete.

P7, with two years of experience in the field, serves as a College Counselor within a private religious institution spanning grades P-12. Situated in the suburbs of Northeast Metro Atlanta, Gwinnett County, this institution places a high emphasis on athletics. P7 has a personal history as a former high school athlete.

P8 has a 22-year tenure in the field, currently serving as the School Counseling Department Chair and the NCAA Liaison for Gwinnett County Schools. P8 serves in a public 9-12 institution located in the upper-class suburban area of Northeast Metro Atlanta, Gwinnett County. The institution places a high emphasis on athletics. P8 has personal experience as a former Division 1 college athlete.

P9 brings 12 years of experience to their role as the Lead School Counselor. Currently serving in a public 9-12 institution located in the middle-class suburbs of Southwest Metro Atlanta's Douglas County, P9 operates within an institution that places a high emphasis on athletics. P9 does not have a personal history as a former athlete.

Research Question 1: Lived Experiences

The first research question asked about the experiences of the participants when advising student athletes. The question was: What are the lived experiences of high school counselors when advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process?

Throughout the interview process, many themes emerged, regarding the experiences of high school counselors as they advise student-athletes in navigating the NCAA college transition

process. These discerned themes can be categorized into the following structure: The main theme revolves around "Roles and Responsibilities," which can be disaggregated into several essential sub-themes, including a) Course Scheduling, b) Consultation, c) Transcripts, d) Educational Programs, e) NCAA Eligibility, and f) Athletic Job Title. *Table 2* displays the frequency with which these sub-themes occurred in the interviews.

Table 2

Research Question 1 Major Themes: NCAA Experiences of School Counselors

Themes	Subthemes	Occurrence	Percentage
Roles and Responsibilities	a) Course Scheduling	9	100
	b) Consultation	9	100
	c) Transcripts	8	88
	d) Educational Programs	8	88
	e) NCAA Eligibility	5	55
	f) Athletic Job Title	4	44

In the subsequent section, the themes will be explored in more detail, using insights from the counselors' interviews to gain a deeper understanding.

Roles and Responsibilities

The theme of "Roles and Responsibilities" was a central aspect of the study's findings, reflecting the multifaceted role of high school counselors in guiding student-athletes through the NCAA college transition process. Among the subthemes, "Course Scheduling" and "Consultation" emerged as recurring themes, each occurring in all nine interviews, highlighting their fundamental roles. "Transcripts" and "Educational Programs" were also prevalent subthemes, featuring in eight out of nine interviews, demonstrating their critical importance in counselor responsibilities. "NCAA Eligibility" emerged in half of the interviews, with five out of

nine participants emphasizing its significance. Additionally, "Athletic Job Title" was a subtheme mentioned by four out of nine participants, showcasing the relevance of one's job title in shaping their roles and responsibilities as school counselors.

P6 communicated,

It's kind of seasonal. So my upper school students, my ninth through 12th graders tend to be heavy at the beginning of the year and the end of the year, and maybe a little bit of a bubble after Christmas when we're switching classes. Um, so my days would probably be split 50/50 with upper school versus lower school in August, September, December, January, April, and May. And that includes college requesting transcripts, letters of recommendation, class advising on schedules for the following year, enrollment dropping and adding of dual enrollment, selective service applications, and scholarship information. And then honestly, God love 'em. They [student-athletes] get so panicked and nervous and scared and overwhelmed. I deal with a lot of social-emotional anxiety of just this huge transition in their life.

Course Scheduling

The research study revealed that "Course Scheduling" plays a pivotal role in the responsibilities of high school counselors when advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process. It emerged as a recurring theme in all nine interviews, highlighting its consistent significance.

P2 said,

The [NCAA] portal serves a dual purpose, catering to both the athletics department and the counselors. It aligns with the athletics department's priority of ensuring NCAA eligibility, which doesn't always correspond to graduation eligibility, although, in most

cases, student-athletes meet both criteria. It's worth noting that certain courses like US History, Film, and Foundation of Algebra are graduation requirements but not mandated by the NCAA. In essence, high school counselors often find themselves as accountants, primarily responsible for scheduling, alongside their traditional counseling roles.

Consultation

The findings of the research study reveal that consultation is a recurrent and crucial aspect of high school counselors' roles and responsibilities when advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process. In all nine interviews, participants highlighted the significance of consulting with various stakeholders, including coaches, parents, and college admissions personnel, to ensure a smooth transition.

P4 asserted, "In addition, I was also available to consult with counselors. If they encountered a situation, they could reach out to me, and we could discuss it."

P5 noted,

I explained that I would regularly meet with students and advise them on the best time to open their [NCAA] accounts. Additionally, if I encountered juniors who hadn't yet opened an [NCAA] account, I would call them in and discuss the matter while offering assistance. In one particular instance, I encouraged a student to fill out their application and complete their NCAA clearinghouse form, stressing the importance of these steps, especially for students who might not have support at home. Nowadays, with the prevalence of laptops, students often handle these tasks themselves, but I still offer assistance by sitting with them, answering their questions, and ensuring they feel confident throughout the process.

P7 mentioned,

We have a large parent-student counselor meeting where we kind of give basic information. We start that conversation in the spring of junior year, and we have individual meetings to talk about senior year classes, testing, and then what they can start doing at that time. We consult with them often as we're talking with students and making sure that we're all on the same page about certain students and their process.

Transcripts

In the study on school counselors, "Transcripts" emerged as a prominent theme, mentioned in eight out of nine interviews. This finding underscores the pivotal role of reviewing and maintaining academic records to ensure student-athletes' eligibility for collegiate sports.

P3 stated:

The coaches are the ones that are encouraging them to create it [NCAA portal].

Sometimes if the student-athletes do it on their own, they might reach out to me and say, they need a fee waiver or can I upload their transcript? NCAA has two members per school who can have access, and those two members are the athletic director and his clerk or secretary. So when that comes to me, I send the request to them and they actually upload the transcript. So I'm not the one that's uploading their transcripts. That's still our AD.

P5 quoted,

That [transcripts and GPA calculations] was left up to the counseling department pretty much. Sometimes they [the athletic department] might even walk 'em [student-athletes] over [to the counseling department]. But they [the athletic department] didn't really handle that [transcripts]. The idea of calculating GPAs and stuff like that made them very

nervous. Even in the digital era, I'm someone who still has notebooks. Everybody's got a paper transcript, and I'm making my notes and that kind of stuff, about kids, just so I know where their interests lie, what they're thinking about.

P9 asserted,

For several years, our administrator would send transcripts to the scouts or the coaches of the colleges that have asked for them. But this is my first year actually getting more involved. I have access to upload [to the NCAA portal] because before the counselors didn't have access to upload the transcripts of NCAA, the coaches did more of the helping with recruiting.

Educational Programs

Educational programs, including classroom guidance for students and NCAA parent education forums, emerged as crucial components in the findings of the research study for school counselors. These programs play a pivotal role in equipping student-athletes and their parents with essential knowledge about the NCAA college transition process. Educational programs were mentioned in eight interviews.

P6 stated,

We're always multitasking. So I would say I'm top heavy there [with classroom guidance]. I do classroom guidance. I'm planning to go into the seventh-grade through 12th-grade classrooms this month to do a lesson on varying needs of what it is based on the age range. So I'm in the upper school classrooms every other month doing a guidance lesson, lesson. Sometimes it's social-emotional, sometimes it's career in college, sometimes it's academic. It just depends on what I've got in my lesson plans using the same three domains of school counseling, academic career, college, or social-emotional.

P9 said, “Our classroom guidance lessons regarding college and career readiness usually include a slide for the student-athletes regarding NCAA eligibility.”

NCAA Eligibility

Within the study on high school counselors' roles, "NCAA Eligibility" emerged as a crucial responsibility, emphasizing counselors' role in helping student-athletes meet NCAA eligibility criteria. Five out of nine school counselors reported that NCAA eligibility was a part of their roles and responsibilities, while the remaining counselors indicated that this responsibility typically rested with the Athletic Department at their respective schools.

P1 affirmed, “I also got involved with the academic piece, recognizing what classes aren't NCAA recognized and making sure that the athletes were in the right classes that would count.”

P5 communicated, “Working in private schools we have such high standards for the classes kids have to take, you almost don't have to worry about that. What the NCAA's requiring we require even higher to graduate.”

Athletic Job Title

The research study revealed that within the Gwinnett County school system, certain high school counselors held specialized job titles, such as "Athletic Counselor," "NCAA Department Counselor," "Athletic Advisor," and "NCAA Liaison." These distinct titles indicated a clear emphasis on the athletic dimension of their roles, aligning with the broader findings of the study that emphasized the diverse responsibilities of high school counselors in supporting student-athletes. The presence of these specialized job titles highlights the specific focus on athletic counseling within these institutions, showcasing the unique responsibilities these counselors had in guiding student-athletes through the NCAA college transition process.

P1 expressed,

So I am one of the regular counselors. I'm the head counselor, but I'm also the liaison, you can call me the athletic counselor. I'm the one that kind of deals a lot with athletes and NCAA stuff as well. I do have a normal caseload. I have juniors and seniors, um, based on the alphabet, but I also do athletics. My other counselors know that a lot of athletic questions will come through me. So a lot of times if a parent might reach out to their student's counselor based on caseload, my counselor will respond and say, "Hey, contact me [athletic counselor]."

P4 verbalized, "A lot of it depended on the school and then the counseling staff. And whether or not they were willing to have someone operating in the position that I was operating in at my school."

P8 pointed out, "The NCAA is one where I'm probably our expert here. The counselors as they have questions come to me and I'll give them the resources that they need. We talk about NCAA eligibility probably once a year in our counseling meetings about how to make sure student-athletes are eligible for the Georgia High School Association and the NCAA."

Research Question 2: Key Challenges and Obstacles

The second research question concerned the challenges and obstacles faced by counselors who support student-athletes. The text of the question was: What are the key challenges and obstacles experienced by high school counselors in supporting student-athletes throughout the NCAA college transition process?

Several key themes emerged on the significant challenges faced by counselors when advising student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process. Two primary themes came to the forefront. First, the theme of "Lack of Knowledge" was evident, encompassing sub-themes such as "Lack of Known Resources" and "Frequent Changes." Counselors expressed their

struggles with a lack of knowledge of resources to effectively guide student-athletes. Frequent changes in NCAA regulations and requirements further compounded this challenge. Second, the theme of "Lack of Communication with Stakeholders" emerged, with subthemes focusing on the "Athletic Department", "Parents," and another on "Students." This theme highlighted the limited communication channels and collaboration between counselors, athletic departments, and parents, hindering the smooth progression of student-athletes through the NCAA college transition process. *Table 3* shows the frequency of the various responses to this question.

Table 3
Research Question 2 Major Themes: Key Challenges and Obstacles

Themes	Subthemes	Occurrence	Percentage
Lack of Knowledge	a) Lack of Known Resources	3	33
	b) Frequent Changes	3	33
Lack of Communication with Stakeholders	a) Athletic Department	3	33
	b) Parents	3	33
	c) Students	3	33

These themes, as narrated by the counselors in their interviews, will be further detailed in the following sections.

Lack of Knowledge

The study revealed significant challenges faced by high school counselors in supporting student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process. A key theme, "Lack of Knowledge," encompassed subthemes like "Lack of Known Resources" and "Frequent Changes."

Lack of Known Resources

Notably, one-third of participants expressed concerns about a lack of knowledge of resources and the dynamic nature of NCAA regulations.

P1 noted, "I realized that they [parents] had a lot of questions and that not every counselor is very knowledgeable of NCAA requirements and things like that."

P4 proclaimed, "And then also from a counseling perspective, some of them [school counselors] just didn't know, it's not part of what we have to know to be a high school counselor."

Frequent Changes

The sub-theme of "Frequent Changes" emerged prominently in the responses of high school counselors, particularly concerning NCAA policies, course credits, and eligibility factors. Counselors expressed the difficulties they face in keeping up with the ever-evolving NCAA regulations and requirements, which can create uncertainty and complexity in advising student-athletes effectively. This theme underscores the need for ongoing training and support to navigate these frequent changes successfully.

Lack of Communication with Stakeholders

In response to the question regarding the challenges and obstacles faced by high school counselors in supporting student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process, a prominent theme that emerged was "Lack of Communication with Stakeholders." Within this theme, sub-themes were identified as challenges in communication with the athletic department, parents, and students. They expressed concerns about the need for improved communication channels and coordination with the athletic department to ensure seamless support for student-athletes. Additionally, counselors emphasized the importance of engaging with parents to enhance their understanding of the college transition process. Furthermore, they noted the

difficulty in getting students to take their grades seriously, underscoring the critical role of effective communication in addressing this challenge. These insights underscore the significance of improved stakeholder communication to overcome the obstacles faced in supporting student-athletes during their college transition.

Athletic Department

The study revealed a significant issue: the lack of communication between high school counselors and athletic departments. Many counselors reported feeling isolated from the athletic staff, which hindered their ability to provide coordinated support for student-athletes. This emphasizes the need for improved communication and collaboration between these two critical entities in the student-athlete journey.

P3 made known,

So they have an annual meeting around spring practice time, and they invite parents to come and they go over their football program. Maybe it's just a general parent night. I have been invited for the last several years, although this past year it was like I was given two days' notice and couldn't make it. Like I was an afterthought, so, I'm not as prepared for it. And it's like I have a little, 5-minute, 10-minute sort of segment within that [meeting] because they want parents to see an academic person, someone who they go to with these specific questions about courses and course options. A lot of times when kids need to get back on track to be eligible for high school football or other high school sports they want parents to put a face and a name to who they can go to, to ask about options for eligibility stuff, and testing and that kind of thing.

P9 stated, "We as a group of counselors tend to fuss at the coaches because they would have college signing days for the student-athletes that we weren't even aware of."

Parents

The research findings indicated that school counselors faced difficulties in effectively communicating with parents when advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process. This challenge hindered counselors' efforts to provide comprehensive support to student-athletes, emphasizing the need for improved parent involvement strategies.

P1 claimed, "I feel like I didn't do that [parent education] as much. And that's something I've thought about, going forward, trying to increase...I think there are some [school counselors] that will take that initiative and reach out, but of course, there are ways for me to reach out more."

P9 mentioned,

Parent education is led by the school counselors and then we notify the coaches. We can say that so far we've not seen a great turnout all the time. If the coaches are doing it [parent education] themselves that's another story there will be a lot more parent engagement, but it's typically led by the school counselors.

Students

The study revealed that school counselors encountered challenges in fostering effective communication with students, particularly in motivating them to prioritize their academic performance and take their grades seriously. This issue was identified as a significant obstacle in supporting student-athletes throughout the NCAA college transition process, highlighting the importance of targeted interventions to engage and motivate students academically.

P4 maintained,

Getting the students and the parents to understand that it's not a process that literally starts your 11th-grade year which is when the kids start speaking with colleges. They

need to understand it's important for them, their grades, and their correct courses to be a part of their four-year plan from the beginning. So, trying to get them to understand to do well from the beginning they can lessen that stress on the back end.

P5 affirmed,

We've gotta make sure that we're putting you [student-athlete] in a situation that is going to make you recruitable in the fact that you are taking the right courses and you are making strong grades, and that is very important. I understand that running the 40 is important. How fast you run the hundred-yard dash is important, how many catches you make, you know, all of that's important. But if you're sitting on the sidelines because you're ineligible, nobody's gonna be happy.

Research Question 3: Experiences and Training

The third area of research asked about experiences and training counselors may have received for counseling student-athletes. The text of the question was: What experiences and training do high school counselors have to acquire and develop their knowledge and understanding of the NCAA college transition process for student-athletes?

With further exploration into high school counselors' knowledge and understanding of the NCAA college transition process for student-athletes, attention is directed toward Research Question 3. This pivotal question delves into the experiences and training that high school counselors undergo to acquire and develop their expertise in this domain. Within this inquiry, two main themes emerged: "Lack of Formal Training" and "Attended Workshops." These themes provide profound insights into the varied pathways counselors take to bolster their knowledge and understanding of the NCAA college transition process. Within the theme of "Lack of Formal Training," essential subthemes include "Had Mentorship," "Grad School Exposure," or lack

thereof; "On the job training" and "Self-taught" were the informal ways counselors have honed their expertise. Simultaneously, the theme of "Attended Workshops" offers a glimpse into the structured training counselors have sought through avenues like "District Level," "Local Conferences," "National Conferences," and "Webinars." Navigating through these themes and subthemes reveals a more profound understanding of the diverse experiences and training regimens that high school counselors employ to better serve student-athletes in their NCAA college transition journey. A summary of the responses is presented in *Table 4* below.

Table 4
Research Question 3 Major Themes: Knowledge and Training

Themes	Subthemes	Occurrence	Percentage
Lack of Formal Training	a) On the Job Training	8	88
	b) Self-taught	6	66
	c) Had Mentorship	2	22
	d) Graduate School Exposure	0	0
Attended Workshops	a) District Level	7	77
	b) National Conferences	6	66
	c) Webinars	3	33
	d) Local Conferences	1	11

Lack of Formal Training

Among the high school counselors, a recurring theme was the "Lack of Formal Training" concerning their responsibilities in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process. Sub-themes within this category included "On-the-Job Training" and "Self-taught" experiences, where counselors often had to develop their expertise informally while working with student-athletes. Notably, none of the counselors expressed having exposure to NCAA eligibility during their graduate school experiences. Some counselors found mentors who guided

them in their roles, highlighting the informal nature of their training in this domain. These findings underscore the need for more structured and formal training programs to equip school counselors with the knowledge and skills required to support student-athletes effectively during their college transition journey.

P6 stated,

I would say minimal [training]. It never even came up in grad school in my program. It was on-the-job [training]. The first school that I worked at was a sixth through 12th school, and it was a huge school because it served such a large body of students and the school counselor is getting named the head of committees with no experience whatsoever. And it's just [being instructed to] get on this webinar on the NCAA website and learn how to do this. That's why I would say my knowledge is at a very basic level and that was one of the reasons why I went to that session [NCAA Hot Topics at ASCA] because I felt like this is an area that I really don't have a lot of knowledge on, expertise wise.

On the Job Training

Many counselors relied on "On the Job Training" to gain insights into advising student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process. This hands-on experience proved invaluable despite the lack of formal training programs.

Self-Taught

Some counselors took the initiative to become "Self-taught" in NCAA college transition processes. In particular, those with personal connections to student-athletes sought out resources and information independently to better support student-athletes in their care.

P3 noted,

Even though I'm specifically the NCAA counselor, it [training] kind of happened because I was self-taught and learned a lot on the job, or even from the person I shared the roles and responsibilities with. I am an avid sports fan, and so that's kind of how I ended up in the role. I think most of us that work in that field [NCAA school counselor], we have a broader understanding of sports in general, perhaps, you know.

P5 verbalized,

I don't know so much about additional training. I saw my oldest son play college sports, and so I remember having a more heightened awareness of people in town doing these [NCAA] workshops. I actually one time, reached out to one of them and asked them if they would send me the information and they did. And they included information about the NCAA clearinghouse. When I had a child going through it, I guess I really delved into finding out all the specifics like [college] visits. Back then you could only have five official visits. Before school started, I always marked out my first day the first couple hours of the day to work on that [NCAA eligibility], to make sure all of that was accurate... In my previous school I had created it [NCAA report]. I knew about it from that packet we would get in the mail.

P8 mentioned, "We also have an NCAA GPA calculator that I created. That's just a spreadsheet that talks about how they [student-athletes] need to put in their 16 units and know the rules. And so that's kind of the way we've [school counseling department] done it."

Mentorship

A few counselors mentioned that they benefited from "Mentorship" as part of their professional development, gaining insights and guidance from more experienced colleagues in the field. These mentorship relationships provided them with valuable knowledge and strategies

for supporting student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process. P1 stated, "I came to Gwinnett a few years ago, um, I started shadowing some other counselors in the county who work with athletes in the NCAA."

Grad School Exposure

During the discussions about their training and knowledge acquisition, the counselors did not verbally mention having graduate school exposure to NCAA eligibility requirements. Those who did make mention of graduate school stated specifically that they had no formal training or exposure in their graduate programs regarding the college transition process for student-athletes. Depending on how long it had been since matriculating out of their program, some did not have formal college and career readiness frameworks at the time of degree completion.

Attended Workshops

Regarding the experiences and training high school counselors have to acquire and develop their understanding of the NCAA college transition process for student-athletes, one notable theme that emerged was "Attended Workshops." Under this theme, several sub-themes were identified, including participation in workshops at the district level, attending national conferences, engaging in webinars, and taking part in local conferences. These workshops and conferences served as valuable avenues for counselors to enhance their knowledge and expertise in supporting student-athletes through the NCAA college transition process.

District Level

The majority of school counselors in the study attended district-level workshops to receive localized training and resources related to the NCAA college transition process for student-athletes. These workshops were seen as valuable for addressing the specific needs of student-athletes within their respective regions.

P3 pointed out,

When there are meetings at the district level when our district staff is having NCAA meetings, be it through the athletic director at the district level or through the counseling staff at the district level, we are the ones that attend those meetings and kind of become more informed in the process. So there have been a couple of meetings at the district level. One was conducted by the county-represented athletic director. He's in charge of that kind of stuff at the district level. He hosted a meeting maybe six years ago. A few years after that, the meeting was conducted by a woman who served in this [NCAA school counselor] position at her high school, in the district. She actually had a paid role by the athletic department at her school. She was working additional hours and verifying eligibility and doing a lot of detailed work with student-athletes and hosting meetings herself about academic eligibility and that kind of thing. She became a true expert in the field and knew all of the ins and outs. And so she kind of hosted that second meeting. Both meetings were actually inviting counselors and representatives. The second meeting I went to, actually, included a 50-50 split of coaches and counselors. They have not had that meeting in a couple of years. So no, it's not an annual meeting.

P4 made known, "The counselor basically had to take initiative. When the county AD went, he would invite me and the local school had monthly meetings. So I would go speak to them probably a couple times a semester."

P8 proclaimed,

I did a presentation at our district four or five years ago for all of the athletics directors and shared it [the NCAA GPA calculator] with them so they could use it with their coaches and their counselors. There are not any meetings coming up that I'm aware of. If

one comes up, I'm probably gonna be one of the presenters. None have occurred since about 2018-2019.

National Conferences

High school counselors also found value in attending national conferences, where they could access comprehensive information and network with professionals from various regions, gaining a broader perspective on the NCAA college transition process for student-athletes. These conferences provided a platform for counselors to stay updated on nationwide trends and best practices in supporting student-athletes.

P3 stated, "I know ASCA has the NCAA Hot Topics breakout session."

P6 affirmed,

I do have one senior girl who plays basketball, and she's quite talented, and her mother asked me a question about dual enrollment and NCAA eligibility, and I went on the website and, and her question was so specific I couldn't find an answer for it. And so, I reached out to them [NCAA] and I got some responses back, but it still didn't quite answer my question. And so I went to the session [at ASCA] in the hopes that I would get that question answered and I did. And so I was able to relay back to the parent that we were good as far as her dual enrollment credits were concerned.

P7 announced,

We've got a regional one for college admission counselors, SACAC (Southern Association for College Admissions Counseling). And then we have the national NACAC (National Association for College Admissions Counseling). So there are opportunities to go to a national conference, a regional conference, and then regional meetings and consulting with other area college counselors.

Webinars

Three of the counselors were informed about and attended webinars, which they found to be a convenient and informative way to enhance their knowledge of the NCAA college transition process for student-athletes. These webinars allowed them to virtually access valuable information and digital resources, making it a flexible option for professional development.

P7 reported, “I went to a seminar. I did a week-long training seminar for college counseling. I did seminars, workshops, as well as on-the-job training closely with the other college counselors that were on staff here. I've done quite a few webinars as well.”

Local Conferences

Only one counselor mentioned attending a local conference, suggesting that this option for professional development may be less common among the participants.

P7 mentioned, “We [the counseling department] are a part of college counseling organizations and professional organizations. So we've got a local one that is in Atlanta, Atlanta Independent Schools.”

Research Question 4: Strategies and Resources

Research Question 4 probes into the firsthand experiences of high school counselors in utilizing strategies and resources to guide and empower student-athletes on their transformative journey. The text of the question was, “What experience do high school counselors have with utilizing strategies and resources to advise and support student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process?”

Within this inquiry, two main themes come to the forefront: "Strategies" and "Resources." These themes open a window into the diverse approaches and tools counselors employ to offer valuable support. Under the theme of "Strategies," essential sub-themes such as

"Individual Meetings," "Classroom Guidance," and "Parent Education" emerge as the multifaceted strategies counselors implement to engage and empower student-athletes. Simultaneously, the theme of "Resources" offers insights into the informational tools counselors harness, including the "NCAA Website," "NCAA Guide for School Counselors," and "Recommended Readings." Navigating through these themes and sub-themes, we gain a richer understanding of the strategies and resources high school counselors employ to empower student-athletes on their NCAA college transition path. Table 5 summarizes the responses to this question.

Table 5
Research Question 4 Major Themes: Strategies and Resources

Themes	Subthemes	Occurrence	Percentage
Strategies	a) Individual Meetings	9	100
	b) Coaches' Referrals	6	66
	c) Classroom Guidance	4	44
	d) Parent Education	3	33
Resources	a) NCAA Website	9	100
	b) NCAA Guide for School Counselors	3	33
	c) Guide for the College-Bound Student Athlete	3	33
	d) Recommended Readings	2	22

Strategies

In response to the question regarding the experiences and training of high school counselors in advising student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process, the study revealed a diverse range of strategies and resources utilized by counselors to provide effective guidance and support. The overarching theme of "Strategies" emerged, with specific sub-themes

including "Individual Meetings," "Classroom Guidance," and "Parent Education." P9 summarized her experience with strategies and resources by stating:

Then of course, you know, there's the student guide for the NCAA, so definitely share that. Um, when we're doing our classroom instruction lessons, you know, there's usually a slide on it, especially for the younger athletes, like it's, you know, freshman year mm-hmm. so they can keep their grades up. And then individual, uh, meetings with them. We tend to hold, um, several individual meetings. Like right now we're doing individual one-to-one meetings with the seniors, and then we know the student is a student-athlete. Then, you know, we have that discussion too to make sure they've done this, this, you know, checked off the boxes.

Individual Meetings

High school counselors spoke passionately about the significance of conducting individual meetings with student-athletes. These one-on-one sessions allowed counselors to gain deeper insights into the unique needs, goals, and concerns of each student-athlete. They were able to provide personalized guidance and address specific challenges related to NCAA eligibility and the college transition process.

Coaches' Referrals

High school counselors play a pivotal role in assisting student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process, with coaching referrals being a key aspect. The findings reveal that coaches typically refer student-athletes to counselors at specific times during the year, such as during recruitment or when considering early graduation. Coaches actively facilitate this connection, with some students also reaching out directly for certain tasks. However, it's noted that students often feel more comfortable talking to their coaches unless specifically directed to

counselors, highlighting the importance of collaboration between counselors and coaches in supporting student-athletes effectively.

P3 pointed out,

Coaches come to me independently. There are different spurts in the year. As final grades are being put in, as coaches come in to recruit student-athletes, as athletes and their families are considering it, then I'm utilized. So obviously when the recruiting window is open and [college] coaches are there on campus, every now and then I might get a text from our recruiting guy they're looking at whether is it possible for an athlete to graduate early and maybe enroll in spring camp. Those kinds of questions come up. Then obviously at junior year when they're creating their NCAA profile, I'm utilized at those times. The coaches are the ones that are encouraging them to create it. Sometimes if they do it on their own, they [student-athletes] might reach out to me and need a fee waiver or to upload a transcript. The NCAA has two members per school that can have access. Those two members are our athletic director and his clerk or secretary. So when that request comes to me, I send the request to them and they actually upload the transcript. So I'm not the one that's uploading those transcripts. That's still our AD.

P5 said, "At my former school, the football coach would always send over the players and they would ask for help with that [NCAA] form."

P9 mentioned,

It really seems, from what I can tell, just in the past, that they're comfortable with their coaches. I did have that instance once, and even then the kid only showed up once. Most of the time the coach had to bring it to my attention, and then I followed up with the students. But just coming on their own, I've noticed just where I am, they seem to be

more comfortable talking to their coaches. Unless the coaches are directing them to go to the counselor.

Classroom Guidance

Additionally, several counselors mentioned their use of classroom guidance sessions or workshops dedicated to college planning and NCAA eligibility. These group settings provided a platform for counselors to disseminate essential information about academic requirements, eligibility criteria, and the intricacies of the college application process to a broader audience of student-athletes.

P8 stated,

It can be at times because there are things like credit recovery courses that count for graduation that do not count for NCAA eligibility. So in our classroom lessons, when the counselor goes into the classroom, we say this for all students, but it covers the student-athletes in that we talk about what courses are eligible for NCAA, what courses are eligible for GHSA, and what the required credits are. Our number one focus is to get them graduated, but if we know they're an athlete, we'll work with them individually as well to make sure that they're becoming eligible for both high school and college.

Parent Education

Furthermore, counselors emphasized the importance of parent education as a crucial component of their approach. They recognized that parents play a pivotal role in the college decision-making process of student-athletes. By organizing parent education sessions, counselors aimed to empower parents with the knowledge and resources needed to support their child's athletic and academic journey.

P3 expressed, “2020 was the first time I was invited to speak at parent night and talk about this NCAA stuff. And so it has kind of grown, as my expertise has been used more by the coaches that are working directly with the college coaches and the student-athletes in the recruiting process.”

P5 noted,

They [NCAA] always would send posters, things like that, where you could put on your bulletin board and they did a kind of a big rollout when they changed the GPA. So they flyers and posters trying to get that information out to people that there had been a change. All of that made it really easy to inform people. When I would do rising freshman orientation and rising senior orientation, I would always include those kinds of flyers so parents could see them. I would also include a flyer that would give the information on the NCAA clearinghouse. I would also include the NAIA [National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics] as well.

Resources

High school counselors frequently rely on various resources when advising and supporting student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process. These resources fall into the main theme of "Resources" and include the "NCAA Website," "NCAA Guide for School Counselors," and "Recommended Readings." These resources play a significant role in counselors' efforts to offer effective guidance to aspiring college student-athletes.

NCAA Website

In response to the question regarding the NCAA Website, it was evident that all of the counselors interviewed consistently utilized this online resource. They emphasized its importance as a comprehensive and up-to-date platform for accessing essential information

related to NCAA policies, eligibility criteria, and guidelines. The NCAA Website served as a fundamental tool in their efforts to stay informed and guide student-athletes effectively through the complex NCAA college transition process. Counselors appreciated the accessibility and reliability of this resource, considering it an invaluable asset in their roles.

P5 verbalized, “In the last few years, of course, I was going to the NCAA website to look at all of that. They [NCAA] used to send you a packet in the mail and I would go through and disseminate that package and look at everything that was being required for division one and division two.”

NCAA Guide for School Counselors & Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete

In response to the question regarding the NCAA Guide for School Counselors and the NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete, it was revealed that only a minority of the counselors were aware of and mentioned these resources as part of their toolkit. These counselors acknowledged the guide as a valuable source of information, offering guidance on the NCAA college transition process. However, it was notable that the majority of the participants did not reference this resource in their responses, suggesting a potential gap in awareness and utilization. Those who did mention it spoke positively about its usefulness in providing specific details and clarifications related to NCAA requirements, but its limited mention raises questions about its overall reach and dissemination among high school counselors.

Recommended Readings

Two counselors mentioned using recommended readings as a resource for advising and supporting student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process. These readings covered various topics related to college admissions, athletic recruitment, scholarships, and NCAA eligibility. Counselors found these recommended readings valuable for staying informed and

often recommended them to student-athletes and parents as helpful references for a successful transition.

P5 stated,

So this is a book, it's called *College Admissions for the High School Athlete*. It's a step-by-step guide. I've got seven tabs of what's the most important parts and several paper clips. I have used that book because it's really very good. One of the tabs I mentioned about how many scholarships are available for each sport. That was huge for me, knowing that there was such a discrepancy. I would flip to that often because, you know, kids would come in and they would say, well, you know, 50 kids will get scholarships and it's like no, 12 do. I would say, guys, what that means is that doesn't mean that 25 people won't be on the team. What it means though, is you're not getting an equivalent of a full scholarship. You might get 20% or 30%. So what you can remember though, is that you can stack scholarships. So if your grades are strong, you could be offered an academic scholarship. If you're in the state of Georgia, you can receive Hope [scholarship].

P8 mentioned,

Then I have a book, *The Student-Athlete and College Recruiting*, I've loaned it out, it was written by a dad a few years ago who started a program because he was trying to find scholarships for his son and he went through and just detailed all of the steps for the eligibility and looking for scholarships and getting your student in front of coaches and that sort of thing. And I've loaned it to my college and career specialists. So, I use that book and I read through it and share it with my counselors. They can read it if they want but the NCAA website, the Eligibility Center has a lot of good resources.

Research Question 5: Recommendations from School Counselors

In the pursuit of continually improving the support system for student-athletes during their NCAA college transition, Research Question 5 explores and formulates personal recommendations aimed at enhancing the training and professional development of high school counselors in their advisory roles. The researcher asked the question, “What personal recommendations can be made to enhance the training and professional development of high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process?” Within this inquiry, three primary avenues emerge: "Collaborations," "Curriculum Development," and "Professional Development." The theme of "Collaborations" encapsulates various dimensions, including collaborations with administrators, the athletic department, district-level entities, and NCAA liaisons. Meanwhile, "Curriculum Development" encompasses areas such as the enhancement of graduate training programs and the enrichment of practicum/internship experiences. Additionally, "Professional Development" is a key focus, particularly through workshops designed to equip counselors with the necessary skills and knowledge. The school counselors interviewed provided personal recommendations that can elevate the training and professional development of high school counselors, ultimately bettering the guidance and support they provide to student-athletes navigating the NCAA college transition process. *Table 6* displays more information about the number of participants mentioning each sub-theme.

Table 6*Research Question 5 Major Themes: Recommendations from School Counselors*

Themes	Subthemes	Occurrence	Percentage
Collaborations	a) NCAA Liaison	7	77
	b) District Level	5	55
	c) Athletic Department	3	33
Curriculum Development	a) Graduate Training Programs	3	33
	b) Practicum/Internship	9	100
Professional Development	a) Workshops	3	33

Collaborations

School counselors in the study provided recommendations for enhancing the support system for student-athletes during their NCAA college transition process. These recommendations revolve around the theme of "Collaboration" and include various facets such as NCAA liaison, district-level collaboration, and strengthening collaboration with the athletic department. The counselors' insights emphasize the importance of fostering collaboration and coordination among these stakeholders to provide more effective support to student-athletes.

P2 stated, "As I see it, maintaining a collaborative model between the counseling department and the athletic department is crucial for handling athletic NCAA eligibility and advisement. This collaborative approach ensures that student-athletes receive comprehensive support to excel academically and remain eligible for NCAA participation."

NCAA Liaison

The majority of counselors emphasized the importance of having an NCAA liaison within the school or district. They recommended that schools consider designating a knowledgeable individual as the liaison to serve as a central resource for NCAA-related

information and guidance. The counselors believed that having an NCAA liaison could streamline communication, improve understanding of NCAA requirements, and enhance the overall support system for student-athletes.

District level

In response to improving counselor training and professional development, some counselors emphasized the importance of district-level collaboration. They suggested that counselors across different schools within the same district should be provided with more opportunities to collaborate more effectively to share knowledge and resources related to NCAA requirements and college transitions.

Athletic Department

Regarding enhancing counselor training and professional development, some counselors highlighted the need for improved collaboration with their school's athletic department. They emphasized that closer coordination and communication between the counseling team and the athletic department would lead to a more comprehensive and efficient approach to advising student-athletes. This collaboration could include regular meetings, joint workshops, and shared resources to ensure that student-athletes receive well-rounded guidance in their NCAA college transition process.

Curriculum Development

In response to improving the training and professional development of high school counselors, the theme of "Curriculum Development" emerged, focusing on enhancing graduate training programs and practicum/internship experiences. Some counselors recommended strengthening these programs to provide more comprehensive education and hands-on training related to advising student-athletes through the NCAA college transition process. These

suggestions aimed to better prepare counselors for the unique challenges and responsibilities involved in guiding student-athletes toward their collegiate goals.

Graduate Training Programs

In considering recommendations for enhancing the training of high school counselors, some participants emphasized the need for improvements in graduate training programs. They suggested that these programs should offer more specialized coursework and practical training related to advising student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process. The counselors believed that such enhancements would better equip future counselors with the knowledge and skills necessary to support student-athletes effectively.

P7 stated, "I would like some better training on better, I guess words for how to help a student-athlete consider a college that is right for them. I'm hoping that [NCAA eligibility] is involved in a course about career counseling."

Practicum/Internship

Counselors emphasized the need to incorporate NCAA college transition advising within practicum and internship programs to better prepare future high school counselors. This inclusion would provide aspiring counselors with hands-on experience and specific skills for supporting student-athletes effectively during this pivotal phase.

P8 asserted, "I think it [NCAA training] could be part of a practicum and an internship. If they wanted to do it in the classes, that would be fine, but the information is not difficult to understand. It's a matter of finding out where those resources are and then looking it up."

Professional Development

In response to the question about personal recommendations to enhance the training and professional development of high school counselors, the theme of "Professional Development"

emerged, with a sub-theme focused on "Workshops." Several counselors recommended that workshops specifically tailored to NCAA college transition processes should be organized to provide counselors with the necessary knowledge and skills to better advise student-athletes. These workshops were seen as valuable opportunities to bridge the knowledge gap and ensure counselors are well-equipped for their roles.

Workshops

The majority of the counselors interviewed recommended workshops as a vital component of high school counselors' training for advising student-athletes in NCAA college transitions. These workshops were seen as a practical and focused means to address the unique challenges in this role, keeping counselors informed about NCAA policies and best practices.

P5 suggested,

I have a workshop on Wednesday for being the AP coordinator, and another workshop in Macon on Tuesday. So you have all these things that are coming out for, you know, big-ticket items like the SAT and the ACT. I mean, honestly, I think the NCAA should be a lot like that, you know, they should be sending something like that out or offering them, you know, in certain cities so people can actually go and have that time to network and mingle.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the research outcomes derived from structured interviews with high school counselors, focusing on their experiences in advising student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process. The chapter addressed the main research question and sub-questions, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, training, strategies, and recommendations that counselors encounter in their roles. The major themes that emerged from

the interviews include the diverse roles and responsibilities counselors undertake, the key challenges they face related to knowledge and communication, the various training experiences they have, their utilization of strategies and resources, and the recommendations they offer for enhancing the support system. These findings shed light on the complex nature of counselors' roles and experiences, offering valuable insights that can inform future research and improvements in assisting student-athletes during their NCAA college transition journey.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter is organized into four sections: limitations, implications, recommendations for school counseling practice and future research, and conclusion. Firstly, the limitations section will highlight both internal and external threats to the study's validity. Following that, the implications section will discuss the practical significance of the study's findings. Subsequently, the recommendations section will provide actionable insights for both school counseling practice and future research endeavors. Lastly, the conclusion will offer a summary reflection on the study's key findings and their broader implications.

This study found that the hypothesis was supported by the research. The variations in high school counselors' experience and knowledge in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process were indeed evident, aligning with prior research and expectations (Carpenter, 2010; Cole, 2006; McCalla, 2013; Midkiff, 2014; Paramo-Garfio, 2017). The diverse experiences and knowledge levels among counselors underscore the need for tailored training and support to ensure that all student-athletes receive equitable guidance. This study contributes valuable insights to the field, emphasizing the importance of ongoing professional development and specialized strategies to effectively support student-athletes as they navigate their academic and athletic transitions. The discussion summary of this research study notes several key themes that emerged from the research. First and foremost, the study underscored the complex roles and responsibilities that high school counselors must navigate when advising student-athletes. It became evident that the school counselors have varying degrees of specialized knowledge regarding the NCAA college transition process, indicating a pressing need for targeted training and professional development programs. Communication with various stakeholders, including coaches, parents, and athletic departments, emerged as a critical factor in the success of student-

athletes during this pivotal transition, emphasizing the importance of effective collaboration. While the study recognized the value of workshops, strategies, and resources in enhancing counselors' abilities, it also highlighted the need for more comprehensive curriculum development to equip counselors with the necessary skills. In conclusion, this study has illuminated the challenges and opportunities faced by high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process, emphasizing the importance of ongoing professional development, collaboration, and improved curricular resources to enhance the quality of support provided to these college-bound student-athletes.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the experiences and knowledge of high school counselors advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. Firstly, the sample size (N=9) may be considered relatively small, and this may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population of high school counselors. Despite using purposive sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) to select participants with substantial experience in this field, the study's outcomes may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives among counselors, especially those from regions outside of Georgia or with different athletic program priorities. The study's findings may still be influenced by regional factors specific to Georgia or the context of southern region U.S. high school sports.

Furthermore, the recruitment methods employed, including snowball sampling and outreach via email, may introduce selection bias (Patton, 2014). Participants who volunteered or were recommended by others may have unique perspectives or experiences, potentially excluding the viewpoints of counselors who were less inclined to participate. Additionally, the

study relied heavily on self-reported data gathered through interviews, which could be subject to recall bias, affecting the accuracy and depth of the information obtained (Smith, 2015).

Lastly, the determination of data saturation, while a common practice in qualitative research, is somewhat subjective (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The point at which no new information or insights emerge can vary among researchers, potentially influencing the depth and comprehensiveness of the data collected. In conclusion, while this study offers valuable insights into the experiences of high school counselors advising student-athletes, the limitations related to sample size, recruitment methods, potential biases, and regional specificity should be acknowledged when interpreting and applying the research findings. Further research with larger and more diverse samples could enhance the generalizability and depth of understanding in this important field.

Implications

The implications of this study hold significant importance for various stakeholders involved in the education and athletic development of high school student-athletes. Firstly, it considers and promotes the continuous professional development of high school counselors who advise student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process. Educational institutions, counseling associations, and the NCAA should prioritize additional specialized training programs tailored to equip counselors with the knowledge and skills essential for this unique role. Additionally, schools should consider enhancing their counseling curricula to better prepare student-athletes for the complexities of the NCAA transition. This might involve integrating relevant information and resources into existing classroom guidance lessons on college and career readiness and hosting parent informational meetings alongside the athletics department. Additionally, recognizing the pivotal role of high school counselors, schools and districts should

provide ongoing support and resources, including mentorship opportunities and collaboration with athletic departments.

Collaboration is a key theme; athletic organizations should actively engage with high school counselors to ensure a seamless transition for student-athletes. By fostering open communication and collaboration, counselors can stay informed about the athletic recruitment process and provide accurate guidance. Policymakers should consider the study's findings when considering the creation of jobs or amending policies related to student support services. This may include developing NCAA advisor positions within high schools with high athletic emphasis. This includes addressing equity issues and advocating for comprehensive counseling services accessible to all student-athletes, irrespective of their backgrounds. Additionally, leveraging data and technology for data-driven decision-making can help schools identify at-risk student-athletes and provide tailored counseling interventions. Lastly, the study underscores the need for ongoing research in this field, with larger and more diverse samples, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and best practices involved in advising college-bound student-athletes. In collective efforts guided by these implications, stakeholders can ensure that student-athletes receive the necessary guidance and support to thrive academically and athletically during their NCAA college transition.

Recommendations

In light of the comprehensive exploration of high school counselors' experiences and knowledge in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process, this section outlines a set of essential recommendations that stand to benefit both the practice of school counseling and future research endeavors. The insights garnered from this study provide a foundation upon which to build strategies for enhancing the support and guidance offered to

student-athletes as they navigate the pathways to collegiate sports and academics. These recommendations encompass targeted approaches to professional development, curriculum enhancement, mentorship, and advocacy, all aimed at improving the role of high school counselors in facilitating successful transitions. Future research directions are outlined, emphasizing the need for quantitative investigations, longitudinal studies, comparative analyses, and the inclusion of student-athlete perspectives to expand our understanding of this critical facet of counseling practice. These recommendations, collectively, serve as a compass guiding both practitioners and researchers toward more effective support systems for student-athletes and the realization of their collegiate aspirations.

School Counseling Practice

Future recommendations stemming from this study have the potential to significantly enhance school counseling practice and guide further research efforts. In the realm of school counseling practice, specialized training programs tailored to the unique needs of advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process should be developed and implemented. These programs should focus on keeping counselors up to date with NCAA rules and regulations. Additionally, integrating enhancements into the preexisting strategies can help better prepare student-athletes for the complexities of college admissions, scholarships, and balancing academics with sports. Establishing mentorship programs and support networks within the school counseling profession can facilitate knowledge sharing and professional growth. School counselors should engage in college advisement advocacy efforts with school stakeholders to highlight their critical role in student-athlete advising and ensure they receive the resources and support necessary for success.

Future Research

In the realm of future research, quantitative investigations should complement the qualitative findings of this study. Large-scale surveys and quantitative assessments can provide statistical insights into the effectiveness of counseling interventions and their impact on student-athletes' academic and athletic outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Longitudinal studies tracking the progress of student-athletes over their college careers can provide insights into the long-term effects of counseling, including academic performance, athletic success, and overall well-being. Comparative studies can shed light on differences in school counseling knowledge and experiences across regions, school types, and athletic program priorities (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Integrating student-athlete perspectives into research can offer a more holistic understanding of the effectiveness of the school counseling NCAA advisement process. Additionally, exploring ethical dilemmas faced by counselors and conducting comparative cultural studies may further enrich the understanding of student-athlete advising dynamics (Mitchell, 2021). These future recommendations have the potential to advance both school counseling practice and research, ultimately benefiting student-athletes as they pursue their academic and athletic aspirations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this phenomenological investigation highlighted the landscape of high school counselors' experiences and knowledge when advising student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process. Through the narratives and insights of these dedicated professionals, several vital themes have emerged, offering profound implications for both practice and policy in the realm of student-athlete college advising.

The first prominent theme to surface is the complex and often ambiguous role that high school counselors must navigate. Balancing their traditional counseling duties with the

specialized needs of student-athletes demands a nuanced understanding of the unique challenges and aspirations of this demographic. This theme highlights the multifaceted nature of the counselor's role in guiding student-athletes toward successful NCAA college transitions. Moreover, the study has recommended targeted training and professional development initiatives for counselors in this specialized field. These recommendations stress the need for counselors to acquire the specific knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to effectively support student-athletes on their journeys. Effective collaboration with coaches, parents, and athletic departments has been identified as pivotal in ensuring the success of student-athletes during their college transition. This theme accentuates the interconnectedness of stakeholders in the student-athlete journey and highlights the school counselor's role in facilitating effective communication and collaboration.

In sum, this phenomenological investigation not only offers valuable insights but also serves as a call to the school counseling profession to acknowledge student-athlete advising. It calls upon educational institutions, athletic organizations, and counseling professionals to work collaboratively to implement strategies that enhance the support system for student-athletes. The study champions a culture of continuous learning and professional growth among high school counselors, ultimately benefiting the next generation of student-athletes as they embark on their collegiate journeys.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

APPROVED
for use

09-Aug-2023 -
08-Aug-2024



Institutional Review Board
For Research Involving Human Subjects

Wednesday, August 9, 2023

Ms. Leah Howard
Mercer University
College of Professional Advancement
3001 Mercer University
College of Professional Advancement
Department of Counseling - Counselor Education and Supervision
Atlanta, GA 30341

RE: A Phenomenological Investigation of High School Counselors' Experience and Knowledge in Advising Student Athletes on the NCAA College Transition Process (H2308151)

Dear Ms. Howard:

On behalf of Mercer University's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, your application submitted on 09-Aug-2023 for the above referenced protocol was reviewed in accordance with the 2018 Federal Regulations [21 CFR 56.110\(b\)](#) and [45 CFR 46.110\(b\)](#) (for expedited review) and was approved under category(ies) _6, _7 per 63 FR 60364.

Your application was approved for one year of study on 09-Aug-2023. The protocol expires on 08-Aug-2024. If the study continues beyond one year, it must be re-evaluated by the IRB Committee.

Item(s) Approved:

The study aims to learn and understand how high school counselors help student-athletes who want to go to college at an institution that offers the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sports teams. The investigator wants to hear from counselors about their personal experiences and thoughts on this topic.

NOTE: You **MUST** report to the committee when the protocol is initiated. Report to the Committee immediately any changes in the protocol or consent form and **ALL** accidents, injuries, and serious or unexpected adverse events that occur to your subjects as a result of this study.

We at the IRB and the Office of Research Compliance are dedicated to providing the best service to our research community. As one of our investigators, we value your feedback and ask that you please take a moment to complete our [Satisfaction Survey](#) and help us to improve the quality of our service.

It has been a pleasure working with you and we wish you much success with your project! If you need any further assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ava Chambliss-Richardson".

Ava Chambliss-Richardson, Ph.D.
Director of Research Compliance
Member
Institutional Review Board

"Mercer University has adopted and agrees to conduct its clinical research studies in accordance with the International Conference on Harmonization's (ICH) Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice."

1501 Mercer University Drive, Macon, Georgia 31207-0001



APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT FORM



COLLEGE OF
PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT

Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study titled "A Phenomenological Investigation of High School Counselors' Experience and Knowledge in Advising Student-Athletes on the NCAA College Transition Process." The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences and knowledge of high school counselors in providing guidance and support to student-athletes who are going through the NCAA college transition process. We aim to gain insights into the challenges and successes of advising student-athletes in their pursuit of college athletic opportunities.

Study Overview

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to engage in a one-on-one interview with the researcher, either in person or via a virtual platform. The interview will be audio-recorded for accuracy and will last approximately 60 minutes. During the interview, you will be asked to share your experiences, perspectives, and insights regarding advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process.

Purpose of the Study

The primary goal of this research is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the challenges and complexities faced by high school counselors in assisting student-athletes during their transition from high school to college athletics. By understanding your experiences, we can identify potential areas of improvement in the support provided to student-athletes during this critical phase of their lives.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision to take part will not impact your relationship with the researcher or your school. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your involvement at any time during the study without any consequences. Additionally, you have the right to refuse to answer any questions during the interview that you find uncomfortable or sensitive.

Confidentiality

Your privacy and confidentiality will be rigorously protected throughout the study. All information collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and stored securely. Data will be reported in a way that ensures your anonymity. Only the research team will have access to the raw data, and any published results will not include any personally identifiable information.

Risks and Benefits

There are no anticipated risks associated with participating in this study. However, sharing personal experiences may evoke emotional responses, and we encourage you to reach out to your

support network or a counselor if you feel distressed during or after the interview. By sharing your insights, you will contribute to the body of knowledge on this topic, potentially improving the support provided to student-athletes in the future.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about the research study, you can contact the principal investigator at Leah.L.Howard@Live.Mercer.Edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (478)-301-4101.

Informed Consent Agreement

I have read and understood the information provided in this informed consent document. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. By voluntarily agreeing to participate in this study, I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years old, and I consent to be interviewed and have the session recorded for research purposes. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. I agree that the information I provide during the interview may be used for research purposes, while ensuring my confidentiality is maintained.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for considering participating in this research study. Your input is invaluable to our understanding of the experiences and knowledge of high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process.

APPENDIX C
SURVEY INVITATION LETTER



COLLEGE OF
PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT
Survey Invitation Letter

Leah Howard

Doctoral Candidate

Mercer University

Leah.L.Howard@Live.Mercer.Edu

August 28, 2023

Dear [High School Counselor's Name],

Subject: Invitation to Participate in Research Study on Advising Student-Athletes on the NCAA College Transition Process

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Leah Howard, and I am a doctoral candidate at Mercer University. I am conducting a research study titled "A Phenomenological Investigation of High School Counselors' Experience and Knowledge in Advising Student-Athletes on the NCAA College Transition Process," and I am inviting you to participate.

Study Overview

The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences and knowledge of high school counselors in providing guidance and support to student-athletes who are going through the NCAA college transition process. We are seeking to gain insights into the challenges and successes you encounter while advising student-athletes in their pursuit of college athletic opportunities.

Your participation in this study is crucial in helping us better understand the unique experiences of high school counselors and how they contribute to the success of student-athletes during their transition from high school to college athletics.

Interview Details

If you agree to participate, the research interview will be conducted via telephone for convenience. The interview is expected to last approximately one hour. During the interview, I will ask open-ended questions related to your experiences, perspectives, and knowledge in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process. The conversation will be audio-recorded for accuracy, and all data collected will be kept strictly confidential.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to decline participation or withdraw your consent at any point during the survey without facing any negative consequences.

Your decision to participate or not will not impact your relationship with our institution or any other organization.

Benefits of Participation

By taking part in this research, you will contribute valuable insights that can enhance our understanding of the challenges faced by high school counselors in assisting student-athletes during the college transition process. Your perspectives may also help identify areas for improvement in the support provided to student-athletes pursuing college athletics.

Confidentiality

We are committed to maintaining the confidentiality of your responses. All data collected will be securely stored and used only for research purposes. Your individual responses will be aggregated with those of other participants to ensure anonymity.

Next Steps

If you agree to participate, please contact Leah Howard at this email address, Leah.L.Howard@Live.Mercer.Edu by August 25, 2023.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study or the survey, please feel free to contact me at 678-749-3774 or email Leah.L.Howard@Live.Mercer.Edu.

Thank you for considering being a part of this important research. Your time and contribution are greatly appreciated, and we look forward to receiving your valuable input.

Sincerely,

Leah Howard

Doctoral Candidate

Mercer University

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL GUIDE



COLLEGE OF

PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT

Interview Protocol Guide (To Be Used by the Investigator)

High School Institution: _____

Interviewee (Title and Name): _____

Interview Comments and/or Observations:

Other Topics Discussed:

Documents Obtained:

Counselor Referrals Contact Information:

Post Interview Comments or Observations:

APPENDIX E
QUESTIONNAIRE



COLLEGE OF
PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT
Questionnaire

Phenomenological Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of high school counselors when advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process?
2. What are the key challenges and obstacles experienced by high school counselors in supporting student-athletes throughout the NCAA college transition process?
3. What experiences and training do high school counselors have to acquire and develop their knowledge and understanding of the NCAA college transition process for student-athletes?
4. What experience do high school counselors have with utilizing strategies and resources to advise and support student-athletes during the NCAA college transition process?
5. What personal recommendations can be made to enhance the training and professional development of high school counselors in advising student-athletes on the NCAA college transition process?

Participant Information Questions

1. What is the type of institution where you are located? (Ex. public high school, private high school, urban, suburban, rural, lower class, middle class, upper class)
2. What is the level of emphasis placed on athletics? (low, medium, high)
3. How many years have you been counseling student-athletes?
4. How would you identify your main role within the school? (Ex. Guidance counselor, NCAA advising, course scheduling, etc.)
5. Were you a former athlete? If yes, please identify which level.