Identifying Factors which may Influence the Development of Self-Efficacy in Student-Athletes

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Goals for Session

* Understanding facets of the development of strong and weak self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and how they relate to student-athlete personal and academic development

* Applying results of study to everyday practice for support services for student-athletes
What are your academic challenges when working with SAs?

Also, what are your curiosities about working with this population?
Study developed as a result of participation in a Directed Research class at Seton Hall University in the fall of 2013.

I’ve become very interested in motivation and achievement, and what ultimately influences academic achievement.

I came across this concept of self-efficacy, (the belief that someone could do something), and I decided to investigate further.
Career-decision self-efficacy has been shown to severely impact a student-athlete’s future (Burns et. al., 2012).

Support services are put in place to help support the student-athlete population, and have been shown to have a positive effect on female student-athletes’ grade point averages (Dilley-Knoles et. al, 2010).

Understanding how these two factors relate could provide great insight to developing better support structures for the student-athlete. This would undoubtedly have great influence on his/her academic and professional journey in addition to increased completion rates, more fruitful major selection, and greater career prospects upon graduation.
Watson and Kissinger (2007) found that student-athletes are more likely to encounter problems with adjustment to college, career planning and goals, and uncertain educational plans.

A study by Cox (2004) showed that student-athletes investment in athletic roles can negatively impact their development on the personal, academic, and career development levels.

It is as a result of this literature that I wanted to get a better understanding what factors help to develop a strong sense of academic self-efficacy in student-athletes.
These studies seemed to focus on outcomes, not processes.

This overlooks skill development, perception, and attitudes that student-athletes have about their own abilities.
Research Questions

* Research Question:

What factors might influence the development of self-efficacy for junior and senior student-athletes who utilize academic support service resources at a private, four year, Catholic university in New Jersey?

* Sub Question:

What barriers to developing self-efficacy exist in the environments that these students live and work in?
Albert Bandura (1977): People can develop a strong or weak sense of self-efficacy based on their exposure and integration with the following

1) Mastery Type Experiences (most effective way to develop self-efficacy)
2) Social Modeling (viewing other successful completion of tasks)
3) Social Persuasion (ability to be persuaded by others)
4) Psychological Response (our mood and emotions influence how well we feel we can do something)

This study specifically looked at academic self-efficacy
In layman’s terms, self-efficacy is the belief that you can do something.

It should be noted that people can have high and low senses of self-efficacy which may not necessarily correlate to strong or weak performance in the classroom.
Limitations

- Instrument developed for study has not been tested and proven.
- Answers from students may not have been completely authentic because of my role as an academic advisor.
- Method of selecting participants was convenience and not offered to everyone.
- Should be more consistent measurement for students who “utilize” support services.
- Study became too large – should have a narrower focus in future.
This qualitative research study took place over a three week span in November/December, 2013. Primary data was sought through means of interviews. Interviews were conducted after a request for interview subjects was conducted. Interviews took place in an office in the athletic center where subjects were not in plain sight of peers.
Eleven students were interviewed (representing nine different teams) through an open ended set of eleven questions which were developed by the researcher. Interviews lasted between 12-27 minutes.

One sophomore, six juniors, and four seniors were interviewed. This group included three international students.

Interviews were recorded using a free recording software, Audacity, on my computer.
Results - Categories

- Resource Utilization
- Routines, Processes, Rituals
- Success
- Self-Assessment
- Perceptions and Beliefs
Results: Emergent Themes

* Time Management
* Organization
* Personal Accountability
* Values
* Support Networks
Every student interviewed mentioned effective time management as a key to his/her academic success:

- “I only have a certain amount of time in the day to get my work done ... I don’t have the option of wasting it.” – KB
- “I seek to master challenges if I have the time, otherwise I just complete them.” – BD
- “I prefer to have less time to complete my work ... I like feeling like I’m under pressure to get an assignment done. I know I don’t fold under pressure and I don’t waste time this way.” – SK
Students described processes which enabled them to be successful. Being organized and having a schedule contributed to perceived ability to be successful.

“High school wasn’t challenging, so when I got here I wasn’t as prepared as I needed to be in order to be successful in a challenging major. Professor M really had a long lasting impact on my success by helping me develop my organizational skills.” – BD

“Staying organized helps me a lot. I feel much more confident when I’m organized.” - GK
Holding oneself accountable for his/her academic success continually surfaced as a driving force behind individual academic focus.

* “It’s okay to rely on some support, but it ultimately comes down to the individual on how successful they are.” – LJ

* “I want to be the best and make an impression on [instructor]. I know that by doing this it will be another person who I can turn to for help. This will help me as I begin to apply for graduate school and consider a career.” – EH

* “I know that this is my responsibility. I try everything I can before coming to you for support because it is my academic experience.” - KH
Students spoke of how supporting or conflicting values could impact their academic trajectory.

“We had a coaching change, and the new coach’s values focused more on sport than the old coach. I struggled when I had to miss a match for an academic obligation.” – DS

International Students (3x)– Major doesn’t dictate future. Knowing they will be successful because they are in a new country and succeeding here.

“It’s hard for me to trust my coach. She says academics should come first, but it doesn’t add up when I practice twice as many hours that I am in class.” - DG
A support network could help or hinder a student’s “ability to positively work through academically challenging situations.”

“My professor suggested I withdraw on the first day of class ... I never had someone tell me that before and it really changed the way that I thought I could succeed in the class in a negative way ... I tried less” – GK

“Showing me that you care, helps me to want to succeed” – GK

“When I’m stressed, I go to my different support networks to talk out my issues. Having a sounding board helps me process my problems and the feedback I get helps guide my actions” - EVH

Many students expressed that they have different people that they will seek out for different issues (social, academic, personal)
There’s no clear cut way to get to having a strong sense of self’-efficacy, but there are factors that may strongly influence the development of strong self-efficacy.

These findings only further what could be investigated, as there are many avenues to explore that I’ve only scratched the surface on.

For professionals in my field, helping students to develop coping strategies and skills, as well as providing positive support and reinforcement seems to be a type of help that fosters the development of self-efficacy.
What does this mean to you?

* As a student support staff member, how might this influence your daily work?
* How do you work with the self-efficacy anomalies?
  * Those with high/low senses of self efficacy and opposite levels of achievement.


Appendices – Interview Questions

Questions for Research Study: Student-Athletes and Self-Efficacy Research Project

1) In regards to your academic pursuits, how would you define success?

2) As an upperclassman at the university, how much do you feel your academic success is a product of your own efforts (not relying on support for success)?

2a) How is your view if support services appear?

3) How do you feel when you are presented with a challenging situation academically?

3a) Are there people you turn to specifically when you are faced with a challenging situation (roommates, coaches, administrators, friends, family) or do you try to cope on your own?

3b) (If answered question with “turn to someone”) What does this person do to help you through the challenging situation? As a result, do you feel like you are more able to deal with these types of challenging situations in the future?

   - If YES – What about working with this person helps you feel like you can complete these situations in the future?
   - If NO – Do you continue to seek out this person for help, or move on?

3c) (If answered question with “cope on own”) How successful are you in working through challenging situations on your own? Explain.

4) As a student athlete, how do you feel your academic pursuits are different from that of a typical undergrad student?

5) While you’ve been at the university, what experiences have led to you feeling more confident in your ability to positively work through academically challenging situations?

6) While you’ve been at the university, what experiences have led to you feeling less confident in your ability to positively work through academically challenging situations?

7) At the university, under what circumstances do you accomplish your “best work”?

8) At the university, what circumstances prevent you from accomplishing your “best work”?

9) When you complete work, do you seek to master the content or challenge, or satisfy the requirements for the content or challenge?

10) Upon graduation, do you feel you will be ready to start a career in which you can be successful?

11) What role did academic support services play in you achieving personal success at the university?
Appendices – Interview Statement

Hello Participant,

You as a volunteer, have agreed to participate in a research study which will be conducted by Ryan Westman for his Directed Research (ELMP 8891) class during the fall semester of 2013. The purpose of this study is to identify what may help students to develop a strong sense of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's own ability to take on and effectively complete challenging situations. In this study, I will be specifically trying to understand factors that relate to the development of academic self-efficacy for student-athletes.

I am very pleased that you have agreed to participate, and I would like to inform you of your rights as a participant. You have the right to remove yourself from the study at any time and have your information discarded. If at any point you feel uncomfortable with the a question, you do not have to answer it. I hope that you will provide me with the most informative answers that you can, but also understand that there is some information that is sensitive and you may not be comfortable sharing it.

At no time will your identity ever be shared. I will assign you a false identity for the purpose of this study, and the only place that your results will be shared will be in the Directed Research (ELMP 8891) class instructed by Dr. Gerard Bapo at Seton Hall University. Your responses will go a long way in helping the Academic Support Services department understand ways to better help students develop self-efficacy. Your contributions are greatly appreciated and I truly value your time and feedback.

Thank you,

Ryan

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