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ATHLETE PERSPECTIVES OF PLAYING-TIME SELECTION COMMUNICATION
IN COLLEGIATE TEAM SPORT

A Masters Thesis presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate Program in Exercise and Sport Sciences
Ithaca College

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Science

by

Anna Bottino

August 2021

Ithaca College
School of Health Sciences and Human Performance
Ithaca, New York

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER OF SCIENCE THESIS

This is to certify that the Thesis of

Anna R. Bottino

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Science in the School of
Health Sciences and Human Performance
at Ithaca College has been approved.

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Date: 10/4/2021

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To Luna, thank you for sitting, drooling, and shedding on my computer. It provided a reason for me to take a much-needed break and clean my workspace.

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And last, but certainly not least, thank you to my amazing fiancé, Katie. You push me every day to be a better version of myself, and you make me brave in life and love. I love you.

DEDICATION

This master's thesis is dedicated to every athlete out there. Your time and dedication to the game matter. Your identities, whether athletic or not, matter. Your experiences matter.

This master's thesis is also dedicated to Anna Bottino circa 2014, freshly graduated from high school and off to chase her childhood dreams. You are an incredible athlete, but you are also so much more than that. Your potential is as limitless off the field as it is on. Never forget that.

ABSTRACT

The realm of elite sport involves the continuous pursuit of excellence (Chelladurai, 2012). Part of this pursuit involves selection decisions in sport, where a coach chooses and communicates who will participate and compete for a team (Lipsyte, 1979). For the purpose of this thesis, selection in sport involves three processes: selection for team membership (or non-selection), selection to maintain team membership (or de-selection), and selection to represent the team in events (or playing-time selection). Further, as coaches are making and communicating selection decisions, athletes are receiving and processing these selection decisions. This exchange of information often elicits negative affective, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes in athletes (Gleddie et al., 2019; Grove et al., 2004; Neely et al., 2016; Seifred & Casey, 2012). There is a body of literature addressing the effects of selection decisions in sport, however this literature solely addresses the experiences of youth athletes in the non-selection and de-selection processes (Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b; Neely et al., 2016; Seifred & Casey, 2012). The purpose of this study is to understand how collegiate athletes are interpreting the communication of playing-time selection, as well as the behavioral, cognitive, affective, and social outcomes involved in this interpretation.

A qualitative social constructivist design was utilized. Participants included 9 NCAA Division I-III athletes (female identifying $n = 6$, male identifying $n = 3$; female identifying mean age: 20.25, male identifying mean age: 20; female identifying SD: 0.52, male identifying SD: 1). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five questions, followed by secondary or follow up questions. Interviews ranged from 30-90 minutes in length. They were transcribed verbatim and coded into respective themes. The final

thematic structure consisted of the following: *contextual factors to playing-time selection, influences to playing-time selection, playing-time communication, responses to playing-time communication, and responses to playing-time selection decisions*. Overall, the findings suggest that the communication of selection decisions is a multifaceted, intricate process between the coach and athlete, relying on forms of implicit and explicit communication as well as several influencing and contextual factors.

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PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION

As a collegiate and national team field hockey player, I experienced numerous highs and lows throughout my career. The highs are consistent with what athletes and fans of sport would expect: the tough wins, the cohesive practices, and spending time with my teammates. The lows were filled with different degrees of uncertainty. For instance, how would my team's performance recover from a devastating loss, or, will we make the post-season NCAA tournament? Perhaps the greatest uncertainty came from times when I was unsure of my status on the team.

Like other elite athletes, I was a competitor; I wanted to be involved in games not only to help my team succeed, but also to be part of the amazing atmosphere that is live, competitive sport. However, as I was part of a team with a large, talented roster, there were times when I did not receive the playing-time that I desired. When this occurred, I was given no reason as to why other athletes were playing over me, or what I could do to increase the chances of me receiving more playing-time. Furthermore, this lack of communication in playing-time selection decisions, and the individual consequences that ensued, have led me to conduct research in this area today.

Collegiate and professional athletics are part of the greater categorization of elite sport. Within elite sport, athletes follow the pursuit of excellence through continuous dedication, improvement and sacrifice (Chelladurai, 2012). Elite sport also creates an arena where there are more athletes on a team than available positions (Chelladurai, 2012). This scenario describes playing-time selection in sport, where some athletes are granted the opportunity to participate, whilst others are not (Lipsyte, 1979).

The processes involved in selection stem from the power associated with the roles and responsibilities of a coach (Short & Short, 2005). The power a coach utilizes in selection decisions can be described as reward power, or a coach's ability to reward athletes' efforts and/or competitive performances with playing-time (French & Raven, 1959). Through this reward power, coaches decide who will be part of a team (i.e., non-selection), who will remain as a rostered athlete on a team (i.e., de-selection), and who will enter into competitions for the team (i.e., playing-time selection).

Non-selection can be described as, "... the removal of a member from a team during tryouts, externally controlled withdrawal, or removing a participant from an opportunity during the tryout process due to a player's perceived lack of skill or potential," (Seifried & Casey, 2012, p.80). This process occurs when athletes have the desire to be part of a team, but have never been on the team roster. Although the available literature pertaining to non-selection in sport is limited, research conducted by Capstick and Trudel (2010a,b) as well as Neely et al. (2016) advances the understanding of the processes of non-selection in sport. The authors describe various methods by which non-selection is communicated (e.g., posted lists, reading aloud names, phone conversations, writing an email or letter, and private face-to-face interactions; Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b) as well as the stages involved in the non-selection process (i.e., pre-tryout meeting, evaluation and decision making, and communicating non-selection; Neely et al., 2016).

Due to the sensitive nature of the non-selection process, it has been observed to elicit mainly negative affective, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes (Barnett, 2007; Brand et al., 2013; Brown & Potrac, 2009; Gleddie et al., 2019; Neely et al., 2016). For

example, athletes could experience decreases in positive affect, feelings of shock, anxiety, humiliation, and anger following non-selection. Additionally, athletes could drop out of their sport and/or physical activity entirely due to the experience of non-selection (Gleddie et al., 2019). Athletic identity is another factor that is impacted by non-selection, as when an athlete is denied a roster spot on a team, their association with the sport could decrease (Grove et al., 2004).

De-selection is defined as, "... the elimination of an athlete from a competitive sport team based on the decisions of the coach," (Neely et al., 2016, p.141). In other words, an athlete who had previously been a member of the team is removed from the team. De-selection can occur for a variety of reasons, including adherence to a roster size, failing to meet levels of skill or tactical knowledge, or behavioral issues. Further, de-selection is unique to higher levels of sport, such as elite club teams, varsity high school teams, and collegiate teams (Seifred & Casey, 2012). As such, athletes coming up from the ranks of youth or recreational sport might not be accustomed to acts of de-selection.

The outcomes of de-selection are similar to that of non-selection. However, unique to de-selection are outcomes related to the social identity of athletes. Social identity derives from an athlete's identification with a group, as well as the affective associations tied to an athlete's group membership (Bruner & Benson, 2018). When an athlete is removed from a team, their social identity could be at risk, as well as factors relating to their social identity. These could include positive affect, self-esteem, personal meaning, and self-worth, as well as personal, and social skills.

Playing-time selection refers to rostered members of the team being given or denied playing-time during events/competitions. In elite sport, there are usually more

players on a team than available positions. Further, a coach must make playing-time selection decisions consistently before each competitive event. This act can be considered an execution of reward power by a coach, as players are awarded playing-time (Chelladurai & Kuga, 1996; French & Raven, 1959; Harenberg et al., 2016a; Laios et al., 2003).

In this study, outcomes for playing-time selection may differ based on selection decisions (e.g., an athlete may feel differently if they are awarded playing-time compared to a scenario where they are not awarded playing time). The outcomes outlined in this study address circumstances where athletes are not awarded playing time. As such, playing-time selection has been observed to elicit negative outcomes in athletes. Further, athletes can experience frustration and/or conflict if there is an unexplained disruption in the rotation of players receiving minutes in a game, or if they observe another athlete playing over them (Harenberg et al., 2016a, Harenberg et al., 2019). Playing-time selection might also elicit role ambiguity or role conflict in athletes if a coach does not adequately explain circumstances surrounding playing-time selection decisions (Benson, et al., 2013). This could, in turn, impact an athlete's perception of their status within the team (Benson et al., 2013). Finally, as coaches are the primary communicators of playing-time selection decisions, and athletes are the primary receivers of this information, playing-time selection has the potential to negatively impact the coach-athlete relationship (Jowett, 2013).

There is some literature speaking to the effects of selection communication to athletes (Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b; Neely et al., 2016; Seifred & Casey, 2012). However, this literature does not address the effects and processes involved in the

communication of playing-time selection to athletes. In studying playing-time selection through the lens of an athlete, coaches may be able to develop an understanding of the processes involved in the communication of playing-time selection, as well as develop strategies to alleviate the effects associated with the communication of playing-time selection to athletes.

Statement of Purpose

There is literature speaking to the effects of selection in sport, such as non-selection, de-selection, and playing-time selection (Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b; Gleddie et al., 2019; Harenberg et al., 2016a; Harenberg et al., 2016b; Harenberg et al., 2019; Neely et al., 2016), yet research regarding the ways in which athletes interpret the communication of playing-time selection, as well as the effects of this interpretation, is presently absent. Therefore, the primary goal of this thesis is to explore the ways in which collegiate athletes interpret the communication of playing-time selection from their coaches. The secondary goal of this thesis is to study the behavioral, cognitive, affective and social outcomes involved in the interpretation of the communication of playing-time selection.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. How are collegiate athletes interpreting the communication of playing-time selection decisions made by their coaches?
2. What are the behavioral, cognitive, affective and social outcomes involved in the interpretation of the communication of playing-time selection by collegiate athletes?

Assumptions of the Study

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions are made:

1. The participants will answer all questions asked in the interview honestly and provide enough detail to answer the questions fully.
2. The participants selected for this research will be the athletes receiving playing-time selection communication from their coaches.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study:

1. Power- "...an individual's capacity to influence another person to do something he/she would not have done had he/she not been influenced," (McCroskey & Richmond, 1983, p. 3).
2. Non-selection- "...the removal of a member from a team during tryouts, externally controlled withdrawal, or removing a participant from an opportunity during the tryout process due to a player's perceived lack of skill or potential," (Seifried & Casey, 2012, p. 80).
3. De-selection- removing a previously rostered member from a team.
4. Playing-Time Selection- rostered members of the team being given or denied playing time during competitions.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study are as follows:

1. The research can be viewed as exploratory since there is no other research addressing this topic. Because of this, there are limited implications going into this research.

2. Only collegiate athletes will be interviewed for this research.
3. Convenience sampling will be used to conduct this research.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are as follows:

1. Findings only can be applied to the population studied (collegiate athletes).
2. A cross-sectional design only allows for the participants' perspectives to be gathered once and does not allow for examination of how their perspectives may evolve over the course of multiple seasons or experiences.
3. The use of collegiate athletes can make the results less homogeneous for specific sports.

PROPOSAL
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The arena of team sport is host to a variety of interpersonal relationships (Jowett, 2003). Perhaps one of the most prevalent relationships within this context is between the coach and the athlete. The coach-athlete relationship is one in which an immense amount of interconnectedness and mutual engagement is present (Jowett, 2013). This bond operates in order for both entities to succeed, whether it be individually gaining technical and/or tactical knowledge, or garnering wins for a team (Jowett, 2013).

Within the context of the coach-athlete relationship are the responsibilities denoted to the position of coach and athlete. These responsibilities are tied to norms, perspectives, and expectations related to these roles (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). For instance, a coach's position might include factors related to team composition, player development, teaching, competing, and organizing (Wilcox & Trudel, 1998; Short & Short, 2005). Further, an athlete's position might include factors related to improvement, discipline, and participation (Simons et al., 1999). It is assumed that the execution of these roles aids in the success of the coach-athlete relationship and may consequently enhance individual and collective effectiveness. However, it is important to note that the coach-athlete relationship relies on social influence, which constitutes a form of power (Rylander, 2015).

The power present in the coach-athlete relationship stems from the assessments a coach makes regarding an athlete's position and role in the greater context of the team (Neely et al., 2016; Turman, 2006). Athletes desire this information, as it aids in their

ability to establish status, and consequently, increase their levels of satisfaction, performance, and purpose within the team (Benson et al., 2013). One way in which athletes can receive these assessments is through the processes involved in selection. Coaches are consistently determining and communicating factors related to selection, whilst athletes are consistently receiving and grappling with this information (Harenberg et al., 2016b). This interactive process may yield significant consequences, namely related to athlete perceptions of the communication of selection (Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b; Gleddie et al., 2019; Neely et al., 2016). As such, the power dynamic that exists between coaches and athletes impacts the communication of selection in sport.

Power

Power has several definitions in the literature. The earliest definition stems from French and Raven's (1959) work, as they define power as, "... limited to the influence on the person, P, produced by a social agent, O, where O can be either another person, a role, a norm, a group, or a part of a group," (p. 260). In the context of this definition, consider the "social agent, O" to be the "influencer" and the "person, P" to be the "influenced". This definition could be applied to numerous social relationships. For instance, the relationship between a coach ("social agent O") and an athlete is one in which power is present. In this dyad, power comes from a coach and influences an athlete.

A limitation to French and Raven's (1959) definition is that power is usually associated with how power utilized by the "social agent, O" influences the "person, P". As such, McCroskey and Richmond (1983) define power as, "...an individual's capacity to influence another person to do something he/she would not have done had he/she not

been influenced,” (p. 3). Notably, the behavioral element is clearly anchored in this definition. Taken together, both definitions highlight that power relies on the influence of an agent on an individual, which is prevalent in the hierarchical structures of collegiate sport (e.g., formal role relationships between coaches and athletes).

The Bases of Power

According to French and Raven (1959), power can be broken down into several constructs, including coercive, legitimate, referent, expert and reward power (French & Raven, 1959). Coercive power assumes non-conformity to the desires of the individual in power will lead to punishment (e.g., a coach requiring an athlete to sprint following the incorrect execution of a skill). Legitimate power is assigned via the role, responsibility, and status of a formal position (e.g., an athlete’s belief that a coach has power, and therefore commands respect and adherence) (French & Raven, 1959). Referent power pertains to the desire to appease an individual or entity in power (e.g., an athlete’s desire to perform a drill correctly in order to satisfy their coach) (McCroskey & Richmond, 1983). Expert power refers to the desired information a person or entity possesses (e.g., an athlete subscribing to the beliefs of an Olympic gold medalist). Reward power refers to a person or entity’s ability to award (e.g., a coach’s selection of starters for a game) (French & Raven, 1959).

Raven (1965) added an additional construct of power, informational power, which refer/s to valued content that a “person, P” might be interested in attaining from the “social agent, O” (Raven, 1965). Further, informational power is not present because of the role an entity possesses, but rather because of the information that entity communicates (e.g., an athlete adheres to a coach due to their interest in the topic being

discussed; Raven, 1965; Rylander, 2015). The constructs of power aid in explaining the ways in which influence is carried-out in social relationships. The coach-athlete relationship is just one of many instances where this influence is present and needs to be utilized in order to succeed (Rylander, 2015).

Power in the Coach-Athlete Relationship

The bases of power provide insight into the ways in which it is exchanged in social relationships. One social relationship in which power is present is the coach-athlete relationship (Rylander, 2016). In this dyad, power derives from the formal position of a coach and is directed towards the athlete in order to influence athlete behavior and team performance (Potrac & Jones, 2009; Rylander, 2016). Further, the power that comes from a coach, as well as the ways in which athletes perceive their coach's power, can vary (Laios et al., 2003; Turman, 2006).

Relying on French and Raven's (1959) bases of power, coach power can be categorized into two subsets: position and personal power (Laios et al., 2003). Position power refers to legitimate, reward, and coercive power, which are associated with the roles and responsibilities of a coach. Personal power refers to expert and referent power. These bases of power are associated with distinctive knowledge or personality characteristics of a coach (Laios et al., 2003). As such, coaches have been found to utilize expert and legitimate power the most, and coercive power the least when attempting to exert power over their athletes (Laios et al., 2003; Rylander, 2016).

Coaching behaviors may impact the ways in which athletes form impressions and attitudes regarding their coaches (Kassing & Infante, 1999). Further, athletes report higher levels of satisfaction when their coaches exhibit behaviors related to positive and

rewarding feedback, as well as social support (Dwyer & Fischer, 1990; Kassing & Infante, 1999; Weiss & Freidrichs, 1986). Coaching behavior can also impact the ways in which athletes perceive coach power (Turman, 2006). For instance, a coach demonstrating negative behavioral characteristics (e.g., demonstrating favoritism, embarrassing or ridiculing players) might influence their athletes to perceive their power as legitimate or coercive (Turman, 2006). On the contrary, a coach demonstrating positive behavioral characteristics (e.g., regularly giving praise, demonstrating investment in sport) might influence their athletes to perceive their power as referent, reward, or expert based (Turman, 2006). Furthermore, the congruency of understanding between intended coach power and behavior and athlete perceptions of coach power and behavior is important when considering the operational success of the coach-athlete relationship.

The ways in which the power of a coach is interpreted by the athlete is partially dependent on the established coach-athlete relationship. Effective established relationships between coaches and athletes involve factors related to empathy, collaboration, and respect (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). These qualities could positively impact the beliefs, attitudes and actions present in the relationship (Megheirkouni, 2019), which may be important for the effectiveness of the communication between coaches and athletes. Further, a coach-athlete relationship that is effective might prompt an athlete to be more receptive to feedback from a coach, whereas an ineffective relationship might hamper this exchange (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003).

An important aspect of the coach-athlete relationship is the necessity of playing-time selection in teams. Usually, teams in a performance setting carry more players than

available positions (Chelladurai, 2012), which requires the coach to select a subset of athletes to represent the team in competitions. Selection decisions are carried out through the various ways in which a coach can exert power (i.e. coercive, legitimate, expert, referent, reward, informational). However, of particular concern to the current study are the ways in which reward power is carried out through the processes of playing-time selection (French & Raven, 1959). More specifically, a coach might grant an athlete playing-time selection based on practice performance, competitive performance, or behavior. In this sense, a coach is exerting reward power through their ability to select who will participate and who will not.

Selection

Because of the formal responsibilities of the position, a coach holds the power of selection over their athletes. Price (1995) provides a general definition of selection as, "... a subset from a set according to a criterion of preference or excellence," (p. 374). Applied to sports, selection has been described as a, "... process... which systematically denies opportunities for participation to the larger portion of the population," (Lipsyte, 1979, p.15). Taken together, these definitions describe selection as a team process in which a certain subset of players are granted the permission to be a member of a sports team and/or participate in team events.

There are at least three types of selection described in sport psychology literature: the privilege to be a part of a team (i.e., non-selection), the privilege to remain on the team (i.e., de-selection), and the privilege to represent the team in events (i.e., playing-time selection). Unfortunately, the terms non-selection and de-selection are often used synonymously with one-another, providing a significant amount of crossover and

ambiguity (Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b; Neely et al., 2016; Seifred & Casey, 2012). As such, it makes it difficult to define and study these processes in sport. For the purpose of the present thesis, definitions and outcomes of non-selection, de-selection, and playing-time selection will be outlined in the following paragraphs.

Non-Selection

According to Seifried and Casey (2012), non-selection is, "...the removal of a member from a team during tryouts, externally controlled withdrawal, or removing a participant from an opportunity during the tryout process due to a player's perceived lack of skill or potential," (p. 80). This process occurs in players who seek team membership, but have never been a part of the team. Further, when these players attend a tryout, they will either be added to the roster of the team or denied the opportunity to be a rostered member of the team. The denial of the opportunity to join represents an act of non-selection.

The available literature pertaining to non-selection in sport is limited. As one of two pieces of research exclusively addressing non-selection, Capstick and Trudel (2010a) provide key contributions regarding the definition and processes involved in non-selection. Capstick and Trudel (2010a) sought to establish a better understanding of non-selection, as well as the ways in which non-selection is handled by coaches, by conducting informal interviews with athletes, parents of athletes, and coaches. Due to findings pointing towards the majority negative analysis of non-selection in sport (Capstick & Trudel, 2010a), Capstick and Trudel (2010b) further addressed the complexity coaches experienced in engaging with the non-selection process. Further, Capstick and Trudel (2010b) proposed a set of reflection questions for coaches to take

into personal consideration during non-selection. It is important to note that the work of Capstick and Trudel (2010a,b) exclusively addresses the experiences of athletes, parents of athletes, and coaches in the realm of youth sport. Although the results of Capstick and Trudel (2010a b) do not directly relate to the non-selection experiences of collegiate athletes, the extensive analysis they provide allows it to remain as a central piece of literature regarding non-selection.

Another important piece of literature in the topic of non-selection pertains to the work of Neely et al. (2016). The motivation behind the work of Neely et al. (2016) is similar to that of Capstick and Trudel's (2010a,b); both sought to better define non-selection and establish a more in-depth understanding of how non-selection is handled by coaches. However, the work of Neely et al. (2016) is unique in that it breaks the non-selection process into three separate phases. These phases involve the following criteria: addressing standards and expectations (i.e., pre-tryout meeting), documenting player-ability (i.e., evaluation and decision making) and meeting with non-selected athletes following the tryout (i.e., communication of non-selection). Whereas Capstick and Trudel (2010a,b) addressed solely the communication of non-selection, Neely et al. (2016) addressed the processes that lead up to this communication, aiding to develop a more in-depth understanding as to how non-selection decisions are made as well as communicated.

The works of Capstick and Trudel (2010a,b) and Neely et al. (2016) present similar findings. Of primary significance was the difficulty in the communication of non-selection (Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b; Neely et al., 2016). Further, both studies found that coaches reported various methods by which they communicated non-selection.

Among these were posted lists, reading aloud names, phone conversations, writing an email or letter, and private face-to-face interactions (e.g., in an office, or in a public arena/space) (Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b; Neely et al., 2016). According to coaching participants in both studies, face-to-face interactions were reported as the most appropriate way to provide feedback to athletes regarding non-selection decisions. Additionally, athletes and parents (Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b), as well as coaches (Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b; Neely et al., 2016) demonstrated collective understanding regarding the difficulties involved in the communication of non-selection to athletes.

Non-selection is a complex process involving both coaches and athletes. Coaches are put in the position to decide who will make up the roster of their team, and athletes receive the decision of their selection or non-selection. What has yet to be discussed are the outcomes related to non-selection decisions, specifically pertaining to athletes. This will be discussed in the following section.

Research indicates that the non-selection process primarily elicits negative psychological and emotional outcomes for athletes. These include a decrease in positive affect, as well as feelings of shock, anxiety, humiliation and anger (Barnett, 2007; Brown & Potrac, 2009; Gleddie et al., 2019). Regarding female athletes in particular, non-selection has been observed to increase the risk for developing a mental disorder (Brand et al., 2013; Gleddie et al., 2019; Neely et al., 2016). Whilst some research highlights that these outcomes stem mainly from poor coach communication and organization during and after the tryout process (Neely et al., 2016), most cite these outcomes as part of the overall result of non-selection (i.e., not making the team) (Barnett, 2007; Brand et al., 2013; Brown & Potrac, 2009; Gleddie et al., 2019; Neely et al., 2016).

The non-selection process has also been observed to elicit negative behavioral effects. The most prevalent of these effects is athlete dropout (Gleddie et al., 2019). In this context, dropout refers to an athlete discontinuing participation from their sport following non-selection. Although there is a large body of literature pertaining to the negative effects of athlete dropout on physical health and athletic participation (Lemstra, et al., 2012; Taliaferro et al., 2010), a smaller body of literature exists to examine the ways in which non-selection specifically affects the physical activity and participation of athletes (Gleddie et al., 2019). Further, it has been observed that non-selected athletes are more likely to have negative perceptions of their athletic ability and increased feelings of resentment toward sport and/or physical activity (Gleddie et al., 2019). The culmination of these behavioral effects is a key factor in an athlete's decision to remain physically active following non-selection (Gleddie et al., 2019).

Finally, non-selection has been observed to have a significant impact on an athlete's identity (Grove et al., 2004; Neely et al., 2016). Athletic identity is defined as, "... the extent to which [the athlete] [identifies] with the athlete role... [defining] themselves in terms of similarity with other athletes..." (Grove et al., 2004, p. 75). An athlete's athletic identity serves as an important factor in how athletes view themselves within the larger social context of everyday life (Benson et al., 2015). Athletic identity also has the potential to influence the ways in which athletes think, act and feel (Hogg, 2000). In an act of non-selection, an athlete is denied a roster spot on a team, automatically decreasing the strength of association an athlete has between themselves and their sport. This experience has been shown to decrease an athlete's view of sport as an integral part of their lives, whilst also potentially affecting factors related to an

athlete's athletic identity (e.g., physical self, emotional reactivity, lifestyle management, self-efficacy, and coping) (Grove et al., 2004; Neely et al., 2016).

De-selection

For the purpose of the present thesis, de-selection is defined as removing a previously rostered member from a team. Accordingly, Neely et al. (2016) described de-selection as, "... the elimination of an athlete from a competitive sport team based on the decisions of the coach," (p. 141). In other words, an athlete who had previously made the non-selection phase (e.g., a tryout) is subsequently removed from a team. This could also be referred to as "cutting" a player from a team. De-selection can occur during any period of the season for a variety of reasons (e.g., adhere to a roster size, skill level, or behavioral issues). For example, consider a rostered athlete on a field hockey team who breaks a team rule (e.g., consuming alcohol before practice) during the competitive season. If the coach feels that this is grounds for removal from the team, this would be considered an act of de-selection.

De-selection is a common practice in higher levels of sport, such as elite club teams, varsity high school teams, and collegiate teams (Seifried & Casey, 2012). On the contrary, in recreational youth sport, de-selection is less likely to occur. A reason for this could be the norms and expectations present in this atmosphere of play. Further, recreational youth sport often encourages as many athletes to participate as possible, allowing everyone who wants to play to have a roster spot on a team. Therefore, when introducing a scenario in which de-selection is possible, or even inevitable (e.g., an athlete either knows they could be deselected, or knows they will be deselected), coaches

should understand there is an increased risk of negative emotional and psychological effects due to the potential novelty of the experience (Couturier, 2009).

The outcomes for de-selection are similar to those of non-selection. As previously stated, non-selection denies an athlete a roster spot on a team, affecting an athlete's athletic identity. De-selection removes a previously rostered athlete from a team, not only affecting that athlete's athletic identity, but also their social identity. As members of a team, athletes often form a sense of social identity (Bruner & Benson, 2018; Bruner, et al., 2014; Rees et al., 2015). Social identity, as defined by Tajfel (1981), is "[The] part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his/her knowledge of his/her membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership," (p. 255). The collective identity of a team can be a source of positive affect, self-esteem, and personal meaning for an athlete (Grove et al., 2004; Krane et al., 2002; Mael & Ashforth, 2001). Additionally, an association is present between strength of perceptions of social identity and individual initiative and self-worth, as well as personal and social skills (Bruner et al., 2017; Bruner & Benson, 2018; Martin, et al., 2017). When an athlete is removed from a team, it could put their social identity, as well as factors relating to their social identity (e.g., positive affect, self-esteem, personal meaning, self-worth, personal, and social skills) at risk. This is an experience unique to de-selection, as an athlete who had previously formed an identity in association with the team experiences a loss in this identity when they are removed from the team.

Playing-Time Selection

While anecdotal evidence of playing-time selection exists in the literature, there is an absence of an operational definition in reference to this part of the selection process. As such, in this thesis, playing-time selection refers to rostered members of the team being given or denied playing-time during events/competitions. Because there are usually more players on a team than available positions, playing-time selection is a decision that is made by a coach before each competitive event (Harenberg et al., 2019).

Playing-time selection falls under the norms, perspectives, and expectations associated with the position of a coach. Further, it is assumed that a coach is evaluating athletes' fitness to play (e.g., practice performances, previous competitive performances, etc.) and choosing which athletes will receive playing-time. As such, the act of a coach selecting players to participate in an event and/or competition can be viewed as a kind of reward power, as players are awarded playing-time based on factors such as stellar practice performance or consistent performance in past competitions (Chelladurai & Kuga, 1996; French & Raven, 1959; Harenberg et al., 2016a; Laios et al., 2003).

It should be noted that selection outcomes in this thesis might have opposite effects based on selection decisions. In the case of playing-time selection, an athlete may feel differently if they are awarded playing-time in comparison to a scenario where they are not awarded playing-time. The outcomes written below address circumstances where players are not rewarded playing-time. They include frustration and/or conflict, confidence in status, motivation, and the coach-athlete relationship.

In the event that athletes are not awarded playing-time from their coaches, they may experience frustration and/or conflict (Harenberg et al., 2019). This may occur due

to several reasons. Consider a scenario where athletes are used to a certain rotation of playing-time during an event and/or game. When this rotation is disrupted or changed, an athlete may experience a misalignment of expectations regarding the amount of playing-time they are given (i.e., they thought they would receive 30 minutes of playing-time, however they only received 15 minutes) (Harenberg et al., 2016a). Athletes may also experience frustration and/or conflict when they observe another teammate receiving playing-time over them, or they see no opportunity to earn playing-time throughout the course of the season (e.g., too many players vying for the same position) (Harenberg et al., 2016b).

Another outcome of playing-time selection involves role ambiguity and/or role conflict. The roles a coach delineates to team members have specific tasks associated with them (Bray, 1998; Eys & Carron, 2001). If a coach does not adequately explain those tasks (e.g., who will not receive playing-time and why), this could create a sense of role ambiguity/role conflict in athletes, leading to potential difficulties regarding athletes' acceptance of their role on the team (Benson et al., 2013). This could negatively impact an athlete by decreasing positive affect, as well as impairing their practice and/or game performances (Beauchamp et al., 2002).

Athletes hold playing-time in high regard due to the status it gives them on a team (Benson et al., 2013). Further, when an athlete is denied playing-time, or not given adequate explanation as to why they are not playing, it could impact their confidence regarding their status and ability. This could potentially lead to an athlete thinking they are considered lesser than that of a teammate who receives playing-time. Furthermore,

decreases in a player's confidence regarding status could impact their motivation to improve, potentially hurting future playing-time considerations (Harenberg et al., 2016a).

Finally, playing-time selection has the potential to negatively impact the quality of the coach-athlete relationship. The coach is the primary way in which playing-time selection is determined and communicated, whilst the athlete is the primary receiver of information pertaining to playing-time. If a coach neglects to give an athlete reasons for lack of playing-time (e.g., overlooking game and/or practice film with athletes, pointing out tactical deficiencies, etc.), this may lead the athlete to decrease their trust in coaching decisions related to playing-time (Jowett, 2013). The coach-athlete relationship may also be impacted by athlete expectations of playing time. For example, when a player's expectations for playing-time misalign with a coach's decision, their willingness to collaborate with their coach and/or team may decrease (Jowett, 2013).

Gaps in the Literature & Purpose Statement

There is a small body of literature speaking to the effects of selection in sport (Barnett, 2007; Brand et al., 2013; Brown & Potrac, 2009; Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b; Gleddie et al., 2019; Grove et al., 2004; Harenberg et al., 2016a,b; Harenberg et al., 2019; Neely et al., 2016; Seifred & Casey, 2012). Within this literature, there is ambiguity regarding the definitions of non-selection and de-selection. Further, definitions pertaining to non-selection and de-selection are often used synonymously. Additionally, an operational definition of playing-time selection is absent entirely.

It should be noted that existing research solely addresses the experiences of youth athletes (Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b; Neely et al., 2016; Seifred & Casey, 2012). Exploration of these effects and processes in elite levels of sport (e.g., collegiate

athletics) are presently absent from the literature. Additionally, there is a lack of research examining the effects and processes of playing-time selection in any level of sport. This provides an incomplete picture of the ways in which selection is carried out and experienced across all levels of sport.

The communication of playing-time selection is a vital aspect of the coach-athlete relationship, and a crucial element to an athlete's reception of reward power. As athletes are the primary receiver of power and communications related to playing-time selection, it is important to understand the ways in which athletes are interpreting this information. Understanding the effects of this interpretation is also important, as it provides a more complete picture of the processes involved in playing-time selection. Therefore, the purpose of the present research is to understand how collegiate athletes are interpreting the communication of playing-time selection, as well as the behavioral, cognitive, and affective outcomes involved in this interpretation.

PROPOSAL

METHODS

The purpose of the methods section is to communicate and explain the design, participants, instruments and interview guide utilized for this research. This section will also describe the procedures, data analysis, trustworthiness, and reflexivity performed to compile results from this research and study.

Design

This study will be conducted from a social constructivist approach. As defined by Amineh and Asl (2015), social constructivism, "... examines the knowledge and understandings of the world that are developed jointly by individuals," (p. 13). Social constructivism has also been defined as, "... the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding," (Kim, 2001, p. 2). To promote further understanding, Amineh and Asl (2015) break social constructivism into two key elements. The first denotes that individuals conceptualize a model of society based on their justification of their lived experiences. The second suggests that language is the most important component of an individual's social construction (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). As such, the lens by which participants view their everyday lives is based upon the interactions these individuals have with people. These interactions are surrounded by unique sociological situations, and together help to develop a knowledge base by which individuals view the world.

Social constructivism is based on three assumptions: reality, knowledge and learning (Amineh & Asl, 2015; Kim, 2001). It is assumed that reality is constructed

through the interactions an individual has in society (Kukla, 2000). Knowledge is assumed to be acquired through the interactions an individual has with the people and environment that surround them (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Further, knowledge has roots in sociological as well as cultural contexts in an individual's life (Kim, 2001). Finally, learning is assumed to be a collective activity where individuals are actively engaging and participating in activities with their peers (Amineh & Asl, 2015; Kim, 2001).

The realm of collegiate sport provides a unique environment where the social constructivist approach can be applied. It is here that student athletes connect through their unique experiences in the classroom, weight room, and practices. A second layer to this experience involves the ways in which collegiate athletes exist within their teams. One of the ways athletes might interpret this existence is through the processes of playing-time selection in sport, as athletes are constantly receiving and evaluating acts of playing-time selection. Athletes may base some or all of their status, role, and identity on the experience of selection (Grove et al., 2004; Neely et al., 2016). Furthermore, the interpretations of playing-time selection could impact the interactions that occur between athletes and coaches, as well as the ways in which athletes interpret sport as a whole (Grove et al., 2004; Neely et al., 2016).

Participants

This research will include a convenience sample of 8-10 NCAA Division I-III athletes in team sports. To recruit participants for this study, the researcher will utilize social media (i.e., Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter). Furthermore, if adequate participation cannot be obtained from this sample, the researcher will contact known individuals who are current collegiate coaches and/or current collegiate athletes to

advertise the study to their friends and/or teams. Athletes on these teams must have at least one year of collegiate playing experience and be 18 years of age or older (e.g., sophomores, juniors and/or seniors on collegiate sport teams).

A prescreening survey will be utilized before the study begins. The survey will include questions relating to demographics (e.g., age, gender, and ethnicity), as well as questions that will help the researcher obtain a better understanding of the participants' experiences with playing-time selection in sport. Questions will include: "Please estimate the percentage of games you have "started" in within the last year," and, "Please rate the amount of playing-time you typically receive in a season below." Based on the answers to these questions, the researcher will determine if participants fit the criteria necessary for the study.

Procedures

Ethics approval from the Ithaca College Institutional Review Board (IRB) will be obtained for this study. Following approval, potential participants will be identified through social media recruitment (e.g., Twitter, Instagram and Facebook). A post advertising the study will be placed on social media (Appendix A). This post will include a link to take the pre-screening survey over Qualtrics (Appendix B). The survey should take about five minutes to complete. Based on responses to this survey, eligible participants will be contacted via email to schedule a time for an interview (Appendix C).

Prior to the start of interviews, informed consent will be sent to eligible participants. This consent will ensure confidentiality of participants involved. This document will also indicate that all interviews will be recorded (Appendix D). Interviews

will be conducted via Zoom (online video-chat platforms regularly utilized by collegiate institutions). Interviews could last anywhere from 30-90 minutes.

Interview Guide

In accordance with the social constructivist worldview, a semi-structured interview guide will be utilized. This layout will provide participants the opportunity to explain their full experiences regarding their interpretation of playing-time selection communication (Creswell, 2013). In order to embrace participants' perspectives, a list of five questions will be asked with secondary or probing follow-up questions when necessary (Appendix E). These questions will include: "There are selection decisions that are inevitably made in the realm of collegiate sport. How would you describe the ways in which playing-time selection decisions are made on your respective team?" and, "As a player, how do you prefer to have playing-time selection decisions communicated to you?" as well as, "How do you feel after a game where you have received a lot of playing-time versus not enough playing-time?" Follow up responses might be engaged through statements and/or questions like, "Tell me more about that", or "In what other areas of your life did this affect you?", and, "Can you give me an example of that?". Following the conclusion of the interview guide, participants will be asked if they have any final comments regarding the topics discussed. The purpose of this interview guide is to help both the researcher and athlete understand the ways in which playing-time selection communication in sport is perceived by athletes, and the impacts imposed because of this perception.

All interviews will be transcribed verbatim after concluding each interview. This transcript will then be sent to participants via email to check for member checking.

Documentation of the interview process via transcript, audio file, and/or video file will be stored on a password protected computer that is owned and solely accessed by the researcher.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is a process impacted by subjectivity, as the presence of preconceptions will inevitably enter into the realms of research (Tufford & Newman, 2010). The researcher's role is to mitigate these biases as much as possible by inputting procedures that will ensure trustworthiness of the data collected and analyses conducted.

Bracketing will be utilized as a means to decrease the impact of preconceptions in the current research process (Tufford & Newman, 2010). To bracket the researcher's potential biases, a physical and intellectual audit trail will be utilized as the study is being conducted (Carcery, 2009). This audit trail will consist of a journal in which all research activities, decisions, memos, and data will be documented (Carcary, 2009). Participants will be asked to read transcripts following the interview process, verify notions and inferences made by the researcher, and, in certain cases, offer explanations for observed patterns in responses (Shenton, 2004). Following each interview, the researcher will write an entry in a research journal in order to develop and interpret new and/or developing ideas. Journaling will also help to identify any new and/or recurring biases in the research (Shenton, 2004). Lastly, prior to the initiation of interviews, as well as the transcribing and analyzation of the data, the researcher will admit and reflect on their biases, preconceived ideas, assumptions, and judgements via a reflexivity statement (Shenton, 2004).

Data Analysis

Data from this study will be analyzed using steps based on grounded theory (Creswell, 2007). After transcription, interviews will be open coded into individual meaning units. Thereafter, these open codes will be reviewed and connected into categories based on observed common or significant themes in the experiences of playing-time selection (Creswell, 2007). The researcher will then create a visual model in order to display central themes in the data. The model will also convey factors that influence these themes, resulting characteristics of these themes, and the observed outcomes of these themes (Creswell, 2007). This visual will help the researcher develop a storyline in order to conceptualize theories surrounding the data. Interviews will continue to occur until the researcher determines that saturation has been obtained (Saunders et al., 2017). Factors that could contribute to saturation involve continuous repetition of themes, ideas, or experiences in participants (Saunders et al., 2017).

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RESEARCH MANUSCRIPT

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important relationships within sport is that of a coach and an athlete. Marked by interconnectedness and mutual engagement (Jowett, 2013), the coach-athlete relationship relies on responsibility and accountability for both entities to individually and collectively succeed. For example, a coach's position might involve team composition and player development (Short & Short, 2005; Wilcox & Trudel, 1998), while an athlete's position might include discipline and participation (Simons et al., 1999). It is assumed that fulfilling the mutual responsibilities aids in the success of the coach-athlete relationship. However, an important factor to consider involves the power a coach holds over an athlete (Rylander, 2015).

French and Raven (1959) defined power as, "... limited to the influence on the person, P, produced by a social agent, O, where O can be either another person, a role, a norm, a group, or a part of a group," (p. 260). A limitation to French and Raven's (1959) definition is that power is usually associated with how it is utilized by the "social agent, O". As such, McCroskey and Richmond (1983) define power as, "...an individual's capacity to influence another person to do something he/she would not have done had he/she not been influenced," (p. 3). Taken together, both definitions highlight that power relies on the influence of an agent on an individual, which is prevalent in the hierarchical structures of collegiate sport (e.g., formal role relationships between coaches and athletes).

According to French and Raven (1959), power can be broken down into several constructs, including coercive, legitimate, referent, expert and reward power (French & Raven, 1959). Coercive power assumes non-conformity to the desires of the individual in power will lead to punishment. Legitimate power is assigned via the role, responsibility, and status of a formal position (French & Raven, 1959). Referent power pertains to the desire to appease an individual or entity in power (McCroskey & Richmond, 1983). Expert power refers to the desired information a person or entity possesses. Reward power refers to a person or entity's ability to award (e.g., a coach's selection of starters for a game) (French & Raven, 1959). In later research, Raven (1965) conceptualized an additional form of power deemed informational power, which refers to valued content that a "person, P" might be interested in attaining from the "social agent, O". The constructs of power aid in explaining the ways in which influence is carried-out in social relationships.

The coach-athlete relationship is influenced by power. Some even argued that power is necessary for a team to function (Rylander, 2015) because the position of a coach lends more status. In the coach-athlete dyad, power is derived from the coach and directed towards the athlete in order to influence the athlete's behavior and team performance (Potrac & Jones, 2009; Rylander, 2016). In this context, coach behaviors impact how athletes form impressions and attitudes about their coaches, as well as perceptions of coach power (Kassing & Infante, 1999; Turman, 2006). For instance, coaches' negative behavioral characteristics (e.g., ridiculing players) might influence athletes to perceive their power as legitimate or coercive (Turman, 2006). Notably, the interpretation of power is partially dependent on the effectiveness of the coach-athlete

relationship, which involves factors related to empathy, collaboration and respect (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). These qualities could positively influence the beliefs, attitudes, and actions present in the coach-athlete dyad and, in turn, enhance the effectiveness of communication (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003).

An important responsibility of the coach is the assignment of playing-time in teams. Usually, high performance teams in a performance setting carry more players than available positions (Chelladurai, 2012), which requires the coach to select a subset of athletes to play in competitions. Selection decisions are carried out through coaches' exertion of power (i.e., reward power). Of particular concern to this thesis are the ways in which reward power is carried out through the processes of playing-time selection (French & Raven, 1959). Specifically, a coach might select an athlete based on practice performance, competitive performance, or behavior. In this sense, a coach is exerting reward power through their ability to select who will participate and who will not.

Price (1995) provides a general definition of selection as, "... a subset from a set according to a criterion of preference or excellence," (p. 374). Applied to sports, selection is a team process in which a certain subset of players are granted permission to be part of a sports team and/or participate in team events. There are at least three types of selection described in sport psychology literature: 1) the privilege to be a part of a team (i.e., non-selection), 2) the privilege to remain on the team (i.e., de-selection), and 3) the privilege to represent the team in events (i.e., playing-time selection). Unfortunately, the terms non-selection and de-selection are often used synonymously with one-another, providing a significant amount of crossover and ambiguity (Captsick & Trudel, 2010a,b; Neely et al., 2016; Seifred & Casey, 2012). For the purpose of the present thesis, definitions and

outcomes of non-selection, de-selection, and playing-time selection will be outlined in the following paragraphs.

Non-selection can be described as, "... the removal of a member from a team during tryouts, externally controlled withdrawal, or removing a participant from an opportunity during the tryout process due to a player's perceived lack of skill or potential," (Seifried & Casey, 2012, p.80). This process occurs when athletes have the desire to be part of a team, but have never been on the team roster. Although the available literature pertaining to non-selection in sport is limited, some research aids in understanding the complexity of the non-selection processes in sport (Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b; Neely et al., 2016). Non-selection can be communicated in various ways (i.e., posted lists, reading aloud names, phone conversations, writing an email or letter, and private face-to-face interactions; Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b; Neely et al., 2016) and stages (i.e., pre-tryout meeting, evaluation and decision making, and communicating non-selection; Neely et al., 2016). Further, although the existing literature surrounding non-selection exclusively addresses the experiences of athletes, parents of athletes, and coaches in the realm of youth sport (Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b; Neely et al., 2016), they remain helpful in providing an understanding of the definition of non-selection, as well as the processes involved in non-selection.

Research indicates that the non-selection process primarily elicits negative psychological and emotional outcomes for athletes. These include a decrease in positive affect, as well as feelings of shock, anxiety, humiliation and anger (Barnett, 2007; Brown & Potrac, 2009; Gleddie et al., 2019). The non-selection process has also been observed to elicit negative behavioral effects, the most drastic being athlete dropout (Gleddie et al.,

2019). Further, non-selected athletes are more likely to have negative perceptions of their athletic ability and increased feelings of resentment toward sport and/or physical activity (Gleddie et al., 2019). The culmination of these behavioral effects is a key factor in an athlete's decision to remain physically active following non-selection (Gleddie et al., 2019).

Non-selection may also impact an athlete's identity (Grove et al., 2004; Neely et al., 2016), which serves as an important factor in how athletes view themselves within the larger social context of everyday life (Benson et al., 2015). Athletic identity also has the potential to influence the ways in which athletes think, act and feel (Hogg, 2000). If an athlete is denied a roster spot on a team, it may negatively affect the strength of association to sport, and lead to other negative consequences (e.g., physical self, emotional reactivity, lifestyle management, self-efficacy, and coping) (Grove et al., 2004; Neely et al., 2016).

De-selection is defined as removing a previously rostered member from a team. Accordingly, Neely et al. (2016) described de-selection as, "... the elimination of an athlete from a competitive sport team based on the decisions of the coach," (p. 141). In other words, an athlete who had previously made the non-selection phase (e.g., a tryout) and has been part of the team for some time is subsequently removed from a team. This could also be referred to as "cutting" a player from a team. De-selection can occur during any period of the season for a variety of reasons (e.g., adhere to a roster size, skill level, or behavioral issues). For example, consider a rostered athlete on a field hockey team who breaks a team rule (e.g., consuming alcohol before practice) during the competitive

season. If the coach feels that this is grounds for removal from the team, the removal of the athlete could be considered an act of de-selection.

The outcomes of de-selection are similar to those of non-selection (Barnett, 2007; Brown & Potrac, 2009; Gleddie et al., 2019; Grove et al., 2004; Neely et al., 2016). However, distinct differences can be found in the cognitive outcomes of de-selection in the form of loss of social-identity. Further, as members of a team, athletes are able to form a sense of social identity (Bruner & Benson, 2018; Bruner et al., 2014; Rees, et al., 2015). Social identity has been associated with positive affect, self-esteem, and personal meaning for an athlete (Grove et al., 2004; Krane et al., 2002; Mael & Ashforth, 2001). When an athlete is removed from a team, the negative consequences due to loss of social identity may be devastating. This is unique to de-selection, as an athlete who had previously formed an association with the team experiences a loss in this identity.

Playing-time selection refers to rostered members of the team being given or denied playing-time. Because there are usually more players on a team than available positions, playing-time selection is a decision that is made by a coach consistently before each competitive event (Harenberg et al., 2019). Particularly, coaches are evaluating athletes' ability (e.g., practice and competitive performances) and choosing which athletes will receive playing-time. This can be viewed as a kind of reward power, as players are awarded playing-time based on their performances and coaches' evaluations (Chelladurai & Kuga, 1996; French & Raven, 1959; Harenberg et al., 2016a; Laios et al., 2003).

In the event that athletes are not awarded playing-time from their coaches, they may experience frustration and/or conflict (Harenberg et al., 2019). This could occur due

to disruptions or changes in players rotations, creating a misalignment in athletes' expectations regarding the amount of playing-time they might receive (e.g., they expected to receive 30 minutes of playing-time, but only received 15 minutes) (Harenberg et al., 2016a). Frustration might also arise when athletes observe another teammate playing over them, or they see no opportunity to earn playing-time throughout the course of a season (e.g., too many players vying for the same position) (Harenberg et al., 2016b).

Playing-time is held in high regard by athletes due to the status it gives them (Benson et al., 2013). When an athlete is denied playing-time, it could impact their confidence regarding their status and ability. This could potentially lead to an athlete thinking they are considered lesser than that of a player who receives ample playing-time (e.g., decrease in confidence). Further, decreases in a player's confidence could impact their motivation to improve, potentially hurting future playing-time considerations (e.g., if a player does not improve, they may not receive playing time or more playing time) (Harenberg et al., 2016a).

A possible outcome of playing-time selection involves the understanding of one's role on a team. The roles a coach delineates to team members have specific tasks associated with them (Bray, 1998; Eys & Carron, 2001). If a coach does not adequately explain those tasks (e.g., who will not receive playing-time and why), role ambiguity. Or role conflict in athletes may occur. In addition, athletes may perceive potential difficulties regarding role acceptance on the team (Benson et al., 2013), which may decrease positive affect and impair practice and/or game performances (Beauchamp et al., 2002).

Playing-time selection also has the potential to negatively impact the quality of the coach-athlete relationship. The coach is the primary way in which playing-time selection is determined and communicated, whilst the athlete is the primary receiver of information pertaining to playing-time. Neglecting to provide an explanation of playing-time selection decisions (e.g., overviewing game and/or practice film with athletes, pointing out tactical deficiencies, etc.) may lead to an athlete's decreased trust in coaching decisions related to playing-time (Jowett, 2013). If an athlete's expectations for playing-time misalign with a coach's decision, their willingness to collaborate with their coach and/or team might decrease (Jowett, 2013).

The small body of literature exploring the effects and processes of non-selection and de-selection in sport solely addresses the experiences of youth athletes (Capstick & Trudel, 2010a,b; Neely et al., 2016; Seifred & Casey, 2012). Non- and de-selection have been less explored in elite levels of sport (e.g., collegiate athletes). Playing-time selection has yet to be explored in any level of sport. This may seem surprising as playing-time selection is a process that occurs more frequently than non-selection or de-selection. For example, a coach engages in playing-time selection on a weekly basis during the competitive season. On the contrary, a coach might engage in non- or de-selection once or twice a year. Considering the prevalence of playing-time selection in the experiences of athletes and coaches, a better understanding of its effects and processes is needed.

The communication of playing-time selection decisions has also yet to be explored. Particularly, there is a lack of information surrounding how coaches communicate playing-time selection decisions in any level of sport. In consideration of the vital role communication plays in the coach-athlete relationship, and an athletes'

reception of reward power (i.e., selection decisions), it is important to understand how athletes and coaches are perceiving the communication of playing-time selection decisions. Additionally, the communication of playing-time selection decisions may have implications for athletes similar to those identified in non/de-selection. Developing an understanding of these implications would provide a more complete picture of the processes involved in playing-time selection. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to understand how collegiate athletes are interpreting the communication of playing-time selection, as well as the behavioral, cognitive, and affective outcomes involved in this interpretation.

METHODS

Design

A social constructivist approach was used to study the interpretations and outcomes of playing-time selection communication in collegiate athletes. Social constructivism is defined as, "... the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding," (Kim, 2001, p. 2). Amineh and Asl (2015) break social constructivism into two key elements. The first denotes that individuals conceptualize a model of society based on their justification of their lived experiences. The second suggests that language is the most important component of an individual's social construction (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). As such, the lens by which participants view their everyday lives is based upon the interactions these individuals have with people. These interactions are surrounded by unique sociological situations, and together help to develop a knowledge base by which individuals view the world.

The realm of collegiate sport provides a unique environment where the social constructivist approach can be applied, as it is here that student athletes connect through their unique experiences in the classroom, weight room, and practices. A second layer to this experience involves the ways in which collegiate athletes exist within their teams. One of the ways athletes might interpret this existence is through the processes of playing-time selection in sport, as athletes are constantly receiving and evaluating acts of playing-time selection. Athletes may base some or all of their status, role, and identity on this element of selection (Grove et al., 2004; Neely et al., 2016). Furthermore, the interpretations of playing-time selection could impact the interactions that occur between athletes and coaches, as well as the ways in which athletes interpret sport as a whole (Grove et al., 2004; Neely et al., 2016).

Participants

Participants included a convenience sample of nine NCAA Division I-III athletes in team sports, six of which identified as female (Mean age = 20.25; SD = 0.52) and three who identified as male (Mean age = 20.00; SD = 1). The majority of participants identified their race/ethnicity as white ($n=6$), with one participant identifying as Hispanic/Latino, one participant identifying as black and white, and one participant identifying as Asian. Most participants were geographically located in the Northeast and Midwest regions of the United States, with one participant located in Australia. All participants had at least one year of collegiate playing experience in the U.S., with the amount of playing-time ranging from minimal to substantial. A full description of participant characteristics can be found in Table 1.

Table 1*Description of Participants for The Study*

Participants	Age (years)	Gender	Amount of Playing-Time	Race	NCAA Division	Sport
1	20	Female	Minimal	White	Division III	Softball
2	21	Female	Adequate	Asian	Division I	Field Hockey
3	20	Female	Minimal	White	Division III	Volleyball
4	20	Female	Adequate	White	Division I	Softball
5	21	Female	Substantial	White	Division III	Lacrosse
6	20	Female	Substantial	White	Division III	Soccer
7	21	Male	Substantial	Biracial	Division III	Soccer
8	20	Male	Adequate	White	Division III	Basketball
9	19	Male	Minimal	White	Division III	Volleyball

Procedures

After receiving approval from the Ithaca College Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher posted a graphic advertising the study on social media (i.e., Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook) (Appendix A). The post included the purpose and procedures of the study, as well as a link to a pre-screening survey conducted over Qualtrics (Appendix B). The survey took about five minutes to complete. From this initial recruitment $n=84$ athletes were interested in being interviewed for the study. Of those 84, 48 (57%) were ineligible to participate due to either being an individual sport athlete and/or being first year student athletes. The remaining participants ($n = 36$; 43%) were then categorized based on age, gender, race, amount of playing-time, and sport division (e.g., DI-DIII) in an attempt to include a diverse sample. This led to 17 participants being emailed to schedule an interview (Appendix C). Interviews were conducted with the first

five participants that responded. After the conclusion of the 5th interview, four more participants were added to obtain saturation. This resulted in a total of nine participants for the study. An informed consent was emailed to the participant after they scheduled a time for an interview (Appendix D). Participants also verbally consented over Zoom before the interview was conducted. All of the interviews were conducted and recorded over Zoom at a mutually agreed upon time between the researcher and participant. During the interviews, the researcher was located in a private office in their home.

Measures and Interview Guide

Recruitment Questionnaire

The recruitment questionnaire listed demographic information such as age, gender and race/ethnicity. Questions related to which NCAA sports the athlete participated in, academic status, sport division, potential injuries that could have kept them from playing, the amount of playing-time the athlete received, and if the athlete was on scholarship. These questions were asked as a yes or no, fill in, and multiple-choice format. Spaces for the participant to provide contact information (i.e., email address) were also provided.

Interview Guide

In accordance with the social constructivist design, a semi-structured interview guide was utilized. This layout provided participants the opportunity to explain their full experiences regarding their interpretation of playing-time selection communication (Creswell, 2013). In order to embrace participants' perspectives, a list of five questions were asked with secondary or probing follow-up questions when necessary (Appendix E). Following the conclusion of the interview guide, participants were asked if they had any final comments regarding the topics discussed.

Data Analysis

Interviews were audio and video recorded on Zoom (Zoom Video Communications, Inc., 2021) and ranged from 30-90 minutes. After each interview, the researcher wrote an entry in a research journal in order to develop and interpret new and/or developing ideas. Journaling also helped to identify any new and/or recurring biases in the research (Shenton, 2004). At the conclusion of each interview, the researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim and analyzed the data. After transcription, interviews were open coded into individual meaning units. These open codes were reviewed and connected into categories based on observed common or significant themes in the experiences of playing-time selection communication (Creswell, 2007). Transcripts and researcher notes were then sent to participants via email for member checking. This process occurred prior to conducting proceeding interviews.

Interviews continued until saturation was reached. Saturation occurred when participant experiences, and/or open codes across each interview became repetitive. Following initial open coding, the data was then analyzed using axial coding. During this process, the open codes were categorized into similar groups based on the experiences of athletes. Finally, the researcher discovered emergent themes based on the axial coding. These themes made up a visual model, which was meant to draw inferences about participants' experiences with playing-time selection communication.

Trustworthiness

There were several procedures used to ensure the trustworthiness of data collection and analysis. First, bracketing was utilized as a means to decrease the impact of preconceptions in the current research process (Tufford & Newman, 2010). To bracket

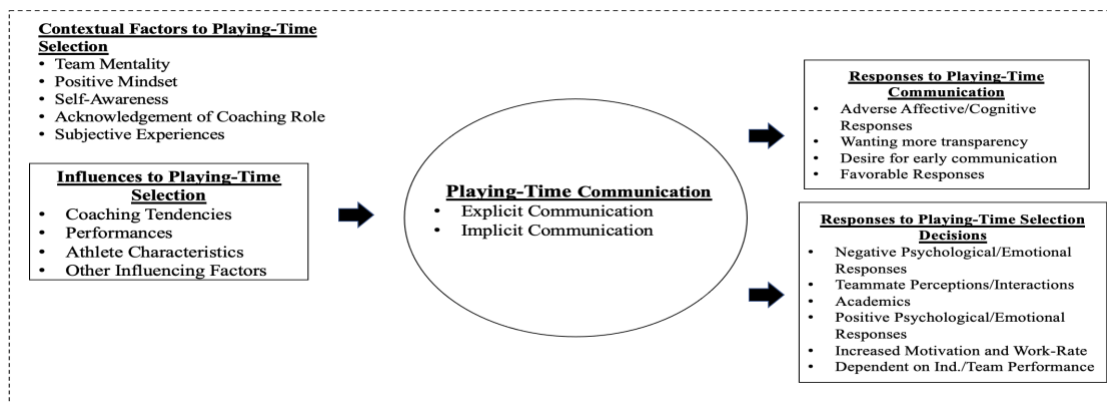
the researcher's potential biases, a physical and intellectual audit trail was utilized as the study was being conducted (Carcery, 2009). This audit trail consisted of a journal in which all research activities, decisions, memos, and data were documented (Carcery, 2009). Participants were also asked to engage in member checking by reading transcripts following the interview process, verifying notions and inferences made by the research and, in certain cases, offering explanations for observed patterns in responses (Shenton, 2004). Lastly, prior to the initiation of interviews, as well as the transcribing and analysis of the data, the researcher admitted and reflected on their biases, preconceived ideas, assumptions, and judgements via a reflexivity statement (Shenton, 2004).

RESULTS

Playing-time selection communication, as described by participants, involves five themes (see Fig. 1): *influences to selection process*, *playing-time communication*, *communication outcomes*, *selection decisions outcomes*, and *contextual factors to selection processes*.

Figure 1

Visual Depiction of Emergent Themes and Sub-Themes



The former themes, as well as their correspondent subthemes, will be described below using supporting quotes from participants. Participant quotes are denoted by (P) followed by a number (e.g., P1). For further information regarding participants, please view Table 1.

Influences to Playing-time Selection

This theme describes athletes' perceptions regarding elements *that influence the selection process*, which most participants spoke to in one way or another. The findings are organized into four sub-themes that are influencing factors: a) coaching tendencies, b) performances, c) athlete characteristics, and d) other influencing factors.

Coaching Tendencies

This sub-theme refers to athletes' perceptions of coaching behaviors that occur prior to selection decision communication. Coaching tendencies contains two categories or components: *coach stubbornness* and *coach evaluation*.

Coach Stubbornness

Participants reported their coaches demonstrating varying degrees of *stubbornness* regarding selection decisions. In the case of some athletes, this fixedness took the form of perceived favoritism of certain individuals over others. Elements of favoritism seemed to transcend objective evaluative measures on teams, making it difficult for athletes who were not considered "favorites" to receive playing-time. One athlete noted, "...as much as I want to say [it's about] a good attitude and everything, it's also, like, if she just doesn't like you, tough chance that you're going to play," (P2).

Athletes also noted what they perceived to be their coaches' hesitancy to alter pre-conceived selection decisions. These included decisions regarding starting line-ups and

substitutions throughout a season and/or game. One athlete mentioned, “He has a set thing in mind, certain people are going to play most of the game, no matter what...” (P8). Based on the observations of athletes, coaches’ hesitancy to change selection decisions was present regardless of team and/or individual performances. Another athlete expanded:

“...when we're losing, especially, our coach has a tendency to not make changes. Then he just like tries to stick it out with the guys who were in the starting lineup. Like one game last year, we were playing against a team who we should've beat easily, we ended up tying two to two, but the whole second half he didn't make a single substitution, which I thought was really weird.” (P7)

Coach Evaluation Methods

Participants also reported methods by which *coaches evaluated* individuals for playing-time. Some athletes reported coach evaluation occurring during pre-season. This served as a time where individuals had equal opportunities to earn playing-time:

“We get, I think, 15 practices in the fall, one day of play before spring season starts. So, during all those practices, she's like, ‘The positions are open to anyone’. It doesn't matter if you're a returner, if you're a freshman. It doesn't matter if you've never really started before, you still have the same chances as everyone.” (P1)

It should be noted that participants who mentioned coach evaluation occurring during pre-season were spring-sport athletes. As such, their pre-season consisted of

months of team practices and scrimmages, providing a significantly large period of time for coaches to evaluate athletes' playing status.

Although pre-season served as an impartial period for coach evaluation, it was not mentioned as the only time athletes were evaluated by coaches. Athletes also noted opportunities to earn playing-time throughout the course of a season due to a coach's facilitation of positional competition. One athlete noted:

“It's never that if you lose a starting spot or you play a bad game that it's just it for you. He communicates very well that, ‘Hey, you had a bad game, everyone has bad games...we'll try someone else, give someone else a shot and you'll be right back in it, like, it's always open competition.” (P9)

Participants also cited their coaches' attention to detail when evaluating athletes. This meant that a coach was attentive to evolving aspects in an individuals' practice or game performances. This was rewarded by either verbal confirmation, or subsequent playing-time. For example, one athlete noted:

“...if they produce well, she notices that in practice. If they were focused on being fitter or pushing themselves harder, she'll notice it, and she'll give them the reward of a little bit more time. The little details are all paid attention to ...” (P6).

Overall, coaching tendencies noted by athletes involved *coach stubbornness* and *coach evaluation*, which served to influence the process of selection. *Coach stubbornness* was observed through coaches' displays of favoritism, as well as the desire for certain athletes to receive the majority of minutes in a game. *Coach evaluation* was reported as

impartial, occurring in both pre-season and the competitive season. *Coach evaluation* was also observed through a coach's attention to detail when making selection decisions.

Performances

This theme refers to athletes' perceptions of the impact performances have on the selection process. The findings are organized into two categories or components: *team* and *individual performances*.

Team Performances

Participants reported *team performances* having an impact on playing-time selection decisions. In some cases, a coach made playing-time selection decisions based on performances that occurred during a game. Most notably, athletes observed that when their team was winning by a large margin, reserves would get a chance to play:

“... there's two teams I'm thinking of right now, where he was putting in, like, the people that usually don't play for a couple points because we were just way ahead and kind of destroying the team.” (P3)

In other instances, predictive team performances against certain opponents influenced playing-time selection decisions. Accordingly, when teams were preparing to play a perceivably less-skilled opponent, reserves on the team could expect more playing-time:

“We had a game we played this year, we played [undisclosed team name], and it was more obvious that ... it was going to be more or less an easier win, [and so] he wanted to rest starters and we had big weeks and like big games ahead of us, [so] he communicated, ‘Hey, every single person on the bench, you gotta be ready to go in.’” (P9)

Individual Performances

Athletes also cited the impact *individual performances* had on playing-time selection decisions. Most notably, the best players for each position were more likely to receive playing-time. Being the best, in the context of *individual performances*, often meant being able to execute in a certain position:

“...it kind of just comes down to, like, across the board, who can get the job done in that position, so who can like defend the ball well, who can finish the goal at top like it kind of just comes down to that...” (P6)

On the contrary, failure to execute often resulted in a loss of playing-time. One athlete noted, “... sometimes he will make changes off of one small mistake. So, if you mess up, like one little thing, you'll come off and get subbed out,” (P7).

Some athletes demonstrated a general understanding that coaches were looking for individual performances that could favorably impact team performances. As such, mistakes and subsequent substitutions were not considered personal. Instead, certain athletes viewed them as beneficial towards a team's overall performance. One athlete mentioned, “I think he just decides based on what gives us the best chance to win,” (P8).

Overall, *team* and *individual* performances were observed to influence playing-time selection decisions. In terms of *team performances*, the playing status of reserves was based on team performances during a game, as well as predictive performances against upcoming opponents. *Individual performances* also proved influential to playing-time selection decisions. Further, failure to execute individually often resulted in a loss of playing time.

Athlete Characteristics

Participants perceived certain *athlete characteristics* to contribute towards the reception of playing-time. Characteristics noted by athletes included work-rate, communication, fitness, and skill. One athlete mentioned, "...what really just goes into it is of course ... who's more talented... who has potential, who's working hard, and a lot of non-factors that talent has nothing to do with... So, who's hustling more, communication, etc.," (P9). Another athlete commented:

"I think my coach looks out for people who are doing extra, who are really engaged and then sometimes when people are just not quite as engaged or as bought in, she's not going to really look at you to put you in." (P5)

Notably, athletes also mentioned the importance of individual adjustment to the team's playing-style. This was often in the context of first-year student athletes who needed to adapt to the pace of collegiate play, "I would say once [freshman] adjust, which is the biggest part of freshman year, um, if they have fully adjusted, I would say that they would probably get more time than the beginning of the year," (P6).

To summarize, participants observed various *athlete characteristics* that contributed to the reception of playing-time. These characteristics included work-rate, communication, fitness, skill, talent, potential, communication, and buy-in. Athletes also noted the importance of individual adjustment to their team's style of play as an influential factor to playing-time selection.

Other Influencing Factors

Although less saturated, participants also reported *other influencing factors* to playing-time selection. The most prevalent of these factors involved coaches'

considerations of tactical strategy. Athletes noted coaches basing the team's structure on the tactical strategy they were trying to implement, as well as the opponent they were facing. One athlete mentioned, "It doesn't really matter what process leads up to it, [just] whoever seems to fit whatever plays or strategy he's trying to do," (P8).

Athletes also observed their coaches composing line-ups based on class hierarchy. This meant that upper-classmen (i.e., sophomores, juniors, and seniors) were more likely to receive playing-time than first year student-athletes. One athlete noted, "They're not inherently based on age, but it does usually end up that way ... like freshmen don't play," (P5).

Other less prevalent, but still notable factors involved the roster size of the team (e.g., larger roster results in more competition for playing-time), NCAA restrictions (e.g., only a certain number of individuals can travel and dress for games), and what one athlete considered to be coincidence, "I guess that I feel like luck and circumstance goes a lot into it. Because I don't think I didn't have the ability to play the way I play now freshman year," (P5).

Overall, *other influencing factors* included a multitude of elements that contributed to athletes receiving playing-time. The most prevalent factors observed were coaches composing line-ups based on tactical strategy and class-hierarchy. Less prevalent factors included roster size and NCAA restrictions, as well as what one participant noted as "luck and circumstance".

Playing-Time Communication

Playing-time selection communication constitutes a coach conveying a playing-time selection decision to an athlete. The findings are organized into two sub-themes or

types of communication based on the perceptions of athletes: *explicit communication*, and *implicit communication*.

Explicit Communication

This sub-theme refers to athletes' perceptions of verbal playing-time communication conveyed by their coach. Within this sub-theme, three categories were identified: *format of communication*, *timing of communication*, and *communication based on status/position*.

Format of Communication

Format of communication addresses the type of explicit communication athletes observed their coaches utilizing. Some athletes described their coaches' communication as transparent, providing them with a sense clarity regarding their roles and expectations on the team:

“...my coach is very, like, ‘I will give you all the details,’ and I think that's kind of nice because you know why you were chosen and it makes sense... There's not really any questioning unless you do have questions for her,” (P1).

If athletes did present with questions regarding playing-time, some coaches were willing to overview the specifics of what individuals needed to work on. One athlete mentioned:

“...Coach is very transparent about, like, in practice, what you need to work on. If you go right up to her, she's very like open to telling you what you need to work on, what you need to practice to get to see time on the field.” (P6).

Athletes who described their coaches' transparent communication also expressed their coaches' willingness to engage in discourse surrounding playing-status. This translated to a sort of "open-door policy", where athletes could approach their coach with questions surrounding playing-time or other concerns. One athlete noted:

"...he leaves an open line of communication, so he's always open. If you want to come into his office and ask questions, and if you're concerned about, like, how practices are going, then he allows you to talk about that..." (P9)

In the experiences of other athletes, coaches were less transparent in their communication. Further, some athletes noted not hearing their playing status until the day of a game. This created a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty in athletes, as they were unsure of the amount of playing-time they might receive:

"He doesn't verbally say you're going to play, you're not going to play, anything like that. It's just, for example, for me, some games I would go into the game not having a clue if I'm going to play zero minutes or if I'm going to come in and play most of the game. Sometimes you just don't know." (P8)

Lack of transparency was also observed in a coach's failure to explain playing-time decisions to athletes. Further, when there were changes to regular playing-time, coaches rarely made the effort to clarify why the changes were made. One athlete noted, "[There's] never any explanation or anything like that... if she switches it, she's just like, 'Okay, this is it'," (P4).

Timing of Communication

Athletes also reported the *timing of playing-time communication*. In the case of most athletes, playing-time was verbally announced right before the game started:

“...he never gave us the lineup before until like after we line up and like we're in the game situation. Like when he's putting in the lineups, that was the only time when we knew set for sure that's who was starting and that's who was going out there.” (P3)

Where some coaches opted for verbally announcing playing-time selection, others chose to write the line-up on a white-board. One athlete noted, “...we don't know until right before the game, so we'll come in and then written on the board you see the line-up,” (P2). It should be noted that athlete observations of verbal and written communication of playing-time solely applied to coaches' communicating starting line-ups prior to the game.

Reserves or substitutes had a much different experience regarding the timing of their selection decisions. Most athletes reported substitutes knowing their status as the game was occurring. In the case of some teams, substitutes were given 10-15 minutes notice in order to prepare to enter into a game. One athlete mentioned, “...when she wants a sub to come in, she'll like tell them to warm up, get ready on the sideline, and then they'll just head right in the game,” (P6). Other athletes did not observe the same courtesy, “...she'd sometimes tap me on the shoulder and say, like, ‘You're going to go in the last five minutes,’ like at the last five minutes. And I'd be like, well, I don't stay warm,” (P2).

Communication Based on Status/Position

Athletes also reported their coaches' efforts to *communicate based on the status or position* of an athlete. This was most prevalent regarding coaches' communication with "starters" or individuals who received substantial minutes on a team. As noted above, most coaches communicated playing-time solely in the context of starting line-ups. This ensured that starting athletes knew their status as they entered into game situations. One athlete noted, "I think generally, [you have a] pretty good idea if you know you're going to be starting, or if you know you're going to be playing," (P7). Players who did not start, however, were often unsure of their playing-status, as one athlete mentioned, "... it's hard, when you're not playing to know where you stand with them," (P2).

One athlete described their coach's unique communication based on the nature of their playing position. The athlete, who is a pitcher on a softball team, explained that their position required a certain amount of warm-up time in order to be prepared to enter into the game. This meant that their coach often communicated more extensively and earlier with the pitchers on the team. Further, other positions on the team did not require the same preparation, and therefore received different communication from their coach, "...if you're not pitching, you don't have to warm up or anything. So, they're like, 'You go in', and they're like, 'Oh okay', and they go right in," (P4).

In summary, athletes reported playing-time communication in the following ways: *format of communication, timing of communication, and communication based on status/position*. *Format of communication* ranged from transparent and detail-oriented coach communication, to a lack of transparency regarding an athlete's role or playing

status on a team. *Timing of communication* largely addressed the communication of starting line-ups, which occurred right before the game via announcing a line-up or writing the line-up on a whiteboard. Reserves or substitutes did not know their playing-status until the game was underway, only sometimes receiving enough notice to warm-up before entering into a game. Finally, athletes observed their coaches *communicating based on the status/position* of an athlete. In most cases, this was in reference to coaches communicating more with “starters” or people who received substantial minutes on the team. Athletes who were not considered “starters” did not receive the same communication. Certain positions were also observed to receive more timely communication. In the case of one athlete, their pitching position required their coach to communicate their playing status in a more timely and detailed manner.

Implicit Communication

This sub-theme refers to athletes’ perceptions of non-verbal playing-time communication conveyed by a coach to an athlete. Within this sub-theme, two categories were identified: *inferring selection decisions based on practice situations*, and *observed consistencies in playing-time decisions*.

Inferring Selection Decisions Based on Practice Situations

Athletes reported *inferring selection decisions based on practice situations*. One way this came about was through athletes’ observations of assignments to teams in practice scrimmages. Based on assignments to scrimmage teams, athletes assumed there was a “starting” and “reserve” team. One athlete mentioned, “... if we do like a scrimmage in practice or something like that, you can kind of like pick out which one's the starting team, which one's not,” (P6). In some instances, the “reserve” team even

acted to prepare the “starting” team for upcoming competitions. One athlete noted, “...when we’re doing a scrimmage, we’ll have our starters and then we’ll have our second team, our scout team. We’ll be playing as if we’re trying to prepare them for the other team’s starters,” (P9).

Another way athletes inferred selection decisions was through training groups in practice. Further, training groups consisted of a “starting” group and a group or groups containing “reserves”:

“...my coach is the type of person where you know if you're going to be starting or not because during practice... [on] one side of the court [are] ... the people that he actually plans on putting in the rotations, and then the other side was ... the bench...” (P3).

Another athlete mentioned, “I mean, in practice, I guess we have the starting five and then the rest of the team. So, if you're practicing with the starting five, then you can assume you're gonna start again and probably play more,” (P8).

Notably, athletes described a sense of “otherness” associated with being assigned to the “reserve” or “substitute” group in practice. This was assumed from the difference in tone and labeling between “starting” and “reserve” groups. Further, when athletes were assigned to the “starting” group, they could assume they would receive playing-time in some capacity. However, being assigned to the “reserve” group left athletes in an ambiguous position regarding playing-time.

Observed Patterns and Consistencies

Participants also reported *observing patterns and consistencies* in playing-time selection (e.g., starting line-ups and substitution patterns). For most athletes, playing-time

decision patterns remained stagnant for the competitive season. One athlete noted, "...he has his key players... for the most part the rotation stayed the same. There were never like any crazy change ups," (P3).

Due to the consistency of playing-time selection decisions, athletes were able to develop somewhat reliable predictions regarding the amount of playing-time they might receive during a game. One athlete mentioned, "...I think sophomore year, predictively 25 minutes into every game I would get subbed on. So, you figure out the pattern," (P7).

In some cases, athletes assumed starting line-ups and substitution patterns based on the first game of the competitive season. Further, if an athlete started or received minutes in the first game, this served as an accurate predictor of playing-time decisions for the rest of the season. Accordingly, one athlete noted:

"After you start, it's pretty much implied that you're going to keep starting... once I started that game, I was super happy because I knew that meant I'd be a starter for the rest of the season... unless anything's dramatic happened..." (P5)

To summarize, athletes reported implicit communication occurring in two ways: *inferring selection decisions based on practice scenarios and observed patterns or consistencies*. In practice, athletes assumed their playing-status, as well as the status of their teammates, based on assignments to scrimmage teams and/or practice groups. These teams or groups were separated and consisted of "starters" and "reserves". Athletes also *observed patterns or consistencies* in coaches' line-ups and substitutions. These served as predictive measures for when/if athletes would receive playing-time throughout the course of a season.

Responses to Playing-Time Selection Communication

Responses to playing-time selection communication are organized into four sub-themes: *Adverse affective/cognitive responses*, *wanting more transparency*, *a desire for early communication*, and *favorable responses*.

Adverse Affective/Cognitive Responses

This sub-theme refers to athletes' *adverse affective/cognitive responses* to playing-time communication, which primarily occurred when there was a lack of playing-time communication from a coach. This elicited significant amounts of stress, anxiety, and confusion, as athletes were unsure as to why their coaches made selection decisions. One athlete noted an experience they had during a collegiate tournament:

“...the first day I got a game, [I] did so good... I felt so good... then the next day, I didn't pitch at all... I was like, ‘What the heck... I thought I did so good... What are they saying? ... Why was I not put in the game? Why did I not even get any innings?’ ... I was very stressed the rest of the day...” (P4)

Additionally, athletes reported that ambiguity surrounding selection decisions negatively impacted their confidence. In some cases, this subsequently impacted playing performances. One athlete mentioned, “... when I got taken out of the starting lineup, [I] didn't really know why... that had a big impact on my confidence level and I ended up not having a great year...” (P7).

Athletes who reported adverse affective/cognitive responses due to a lack of playing-time selection communication also reported making assumptions regarding their playing status. Further, assumptions of status did not always reflect reality, or a coach's

true intentions. One athlete remembered a time when they were placed in a less prestigious training group:

“...I took that as, ‘Oh, he's putting me down a level and saying that I'm never... I'm not at that level.’ In reality, I figured this out afterwards, he just wanted to work on me one on one. And I just wish he would have communicated that with me.” (P3)

Overall, when a lack of playing-time communication was present, athletes reported *adverse affective/cognitive responses*, including stress, anxiety, confusion and a lack of overall confidence. Responses related to stress, anxiety, and confusion influenced athletes to make assumptions about their playing-status on a team that were, at times, incorrect. Further, impacts to athletes’ overall levels of confidence due to a lack of communication negatively affected athletes’ playing performances.

Wanting More Transparency

Athletes also expressed *wanting more transparency* surrounding the communication of playing-time selection decisions. This transparency would provide athletes with more clarity regarding their playing-status on a team, as well as the amount of playing-time they might receive on a game-by-game basis:

“... it would be nice if he was a little more upfront... Like if we knew a little bit more of the thought process... some games I wouldn't expect to play, and then I would have to play or I would get to play a lot. And then some games, I would be thinking I'm going to play the whole game and then I barely play at all. It'd be nice if he said it.” (P8)

Another athlete reflected on their first-year experience:

“I wish there wasn't that type of speculation that happened... I guess I just wish it was more out in the open because like freshman year when I got told I couldn't dress, I had no idea she thought of me... like that's how she viewed me as a player.” (P5)

Notably, the desire for transparent and clear communication of playing-status is present regardless of the selection decision (i.e., getting playing-time, or not getting playing-time).

Beyond wanting to receive transparent communication regarding their playing-status, athletes also expressed a desire to know why their coaches made certain playing-time decisions. Accordingly, providing athletes with explanations for playing-time decisions would help them put these decisions into context. One athlete mentioned, “... if [they] make changes, I prefer to like be communicated the reasons for the changes. We don't always get that,” (P7).

To summarize, athletes who received little/no communication surrounding playing-time decisions *wanted more transparency* surrounding playing-time selection. This stemmed from athletes wanting to know their playing-status on a team, as well as the amount of playing-time they might receive on a game-by-game basis. Additionally, athletes expressed wanting explanations for playing-time selection decisions, as this would help them put their coaches' decisions into context.

Desire for Early Communication

Athletes also reported a *desire for early communication* of playing-time selection decisions. In some cases, athletes expressed wanting to know their playing-status a day or days prior to a game. One athlete mentioned, “I prefer to be told like the day before, or a

few days before so that we can practice with the starting lineup a few days before in practice,” (P7). Athletes noted that early communication would help them to process their playing status for upcoming games, “...you can like mentally prepare yourself, [and] if you weren't starting or if you weren't playing, I think that would be good too,” the same athlete continued, “... just as much as the people who are playing and starting need to mentally prepare and think about it, so do those who aren't playing,” (P2).

Other athletes expressed wanting to hear playing-time communication earlier on game day. In this context, athletes’ perceptions of early communication ranged from the morning of the game to less than an hour before the game starts:

“... like 45 minutes or like once we get to the field, I'd like to know if I'm pitching or not or like that morning like when we get on the bus, like, okay, you're pitching, just so you know.” (P4)

It should be noted that athletes generally expressed a desire for the early communication of solely starting status. Although less prevalent, some athletes also differentiated the timing of communication for substitutes, as one athlete mentioned, “I prepare differently if I'm starting versus coming off the bench,” (P7). Further, athletes wanted to know their substitution status with enough time allotted for warm-up before entering into the game, “I'd rather, like, a nice 20 minutes or something, at least for subs,” (P4).

In summary, athletes expressed a *desire for early communication* regarding their playing status, as this would allow them to prepare for their competitive role in games. In some instances, this meant communicating playing-status a day or days prior to a game. In others, this meant hearing their playing-status at some point on game-day (e.g., the

morning of, or an hour before). Although athletes mainly expressed wanting earlier communication in terms of starting status, others differentiated the timing of communication between starters and substitutes. Further, athletes generally expressed a desire for substitutes to receive communication with enough time allotted for a warm-up before entering into a game.

Favorable responses

This sub-theme refers to athletes' *favorable responses* to playing-time communication. These responses primarily occurred in athletes who experienced more transparent communication. One athlete noted, "... I really like the way that we communicate for playing time... because people know what they have to work on, they know what they need to do and what she's expecting from them," (P6). Further, athletes reported that role clarity from their coach eased tensions surrounding playing status, "I think going into it with knowing your role, it kind of takes that stress away," (P1).

Notably, favorable responses to communication extended to circumstances where athletes did not receive playing-time. This was the case when athletes were provided immediate reasoning regarding why a playing-time decision was made. One athlete recalled an instance where their coach outlined a playing-time decision that left them initially confused and upset:

"After that game I remember just being, like, it felt really nice to have my coach talk to me like face to face and be very honest with me instead of him just like dodging the question. I didn't even instigate it, he called me up to the front of the bus to talk to me about it and it felt really nice to have them communicate with me," (P9).

Overall, athletes presented with more *favorable responses* when their coaches were transparent regarding athletes' roles and expectations on the team. This, in turn, helped athletes to feel less stressed about their playing status. Further, favorable responses to communication extended to circumstances where athletes did not receive playing-time. This was due to the detailed and timely manner of coaches' communication of playing-time decisions.

Responses to Playing-Time Selection Decisions

The communication of playing-time selection decisions involves two key elements: communication and selection. These elements are not mutually exclusive, as communication, or a lack of, happens in the context of a playing-time decisions. As such, when athletes were asked about their experiences with playing-time selection communication, playing-time selection decisions were inevitably discussed. Accordingly, the following section addresses athlete responses exclusively related to selection decisions. The findings are organized into six sub-themes: *adverse affective/cognitive responses, teammate perceptions/interactions, academics, favorable affective/cognitive responses, increased motivation and work-rate, and conditional based on performance.*

Negative Psychological/Emotional Responses

This sub-theme describes athletes' *adverse affective/cognitive responses* to playing-time decisions, which mainly occurred when athletes did not receive playing-time. Athletes expressed varying degrees of negative emotion, including stress, worry, nervousness, and sadness. One athlete described their feelings when they didn't receive playing-time, "...it's more like, 'That was sad, I didn't get to like have fun, I watched all

my friends have fun’,” (P1). Another athlete agreed, “...I used to cry all the time about getting enough playing time,” (P2).

Frustration was also a prevalent response amongst athletes. Frustration was reported when athletes expected to receive playing-time, but did not receive any. One athlete mentioned, “...it's frustrating, it's upsetting if you're not getting the time you want, or like not seeing as much of the field as you're hoping for...,” (P6). Notably, athlete frustrations stemmed from both wanting to receive playing-time and wanting to contribute towards their team’s successes, “... when we're not winning, just like sitting on the bench and we're losing, I just get frustrated because sometimes I know that I could be on the field, making a difference,” (P7).

Athletes also noted disappointment associated with a lack of playing-time. In most cases, this was due to athletes’ perceptions that they were putting in the same amount of effort as their teammates and still not receiving the playing-time they thought they deserved, “... I guess it feels like you were working hard and you didn't get the reward that some of the other players may have gotten,” (P8). Over time, these responses impacted athletes’ feelings of involvement with the team:

“I remember freshman year when I didn't play, it was hard to pay attention to games, which sounds bad, but we're like, we're never getting in and now we're just standing in the cold and we're cold and I just want to go warm up, you know.” (P5)

Athletes reported coping with these responses by building an identity outside of sport. Further, athletes emphasized the importance of keeping their athletic and non-athletic lives separate. One athlete noted:

“... it's something that can be tough to do at points, but I think for the most part, kind of keeping your student life separate from your athletic life [is important] because if you let them cross over all the time, then it will just be kind of a disaster.” (P9)

Another athlete explained how the separation between their athletic and non-athletic life puts their negative experiences with playing-time into perspective, “I try to separate it from everything else because, at least to me, there’s more important things than how much I'm playing,” (P8).

Overall, athletes reported *negative psychological/emotional responses* when they did not receive playing-time. These responses included stress, worry, nervousness, sadness, frustration, and disappointment. Further, the culmination of these responses impacted athletes’ feelings of involvement with the team. Athletes expressed coping with adverse affective/cognitive responses to playing-time by building an identity outside of sport. In some cases, this identity helped them to gain perspective surrounding their playing-time experiences.

Teammate Perceptions/Interactions

Playing-time was observed to impact the *perceptions and interactions* that occurred amongst teammates. Most athletes reported making comparisons between themselves and their teammates in response to unfavorable playing-time decisions. One athlete mentioned,

“... you obviously compare yourself to other people, and it's just like, you feel like you’re doing the exact same thing or even better than other

people, [and] they still start them and it's like just the worst feeling honestly.” (P2)

Another athlete expanded, “... selfishly, you're like, ‘Oh, they messed up during the game, they played bad. I could have done better. I was doing better in practice.’,” (P8). Notably, some athletes recognized these comparisons as negative perceptions that occurred as natural responses to the desire for playing-time:

“... it's important that you don't have those like little, you know, little devil thoughts telling you, like, oh, like, you know, that could be you. But it's hard, like, of course, because everyone wants to play and everyone's human...” (P1)

Athlete comparisons were tied to individuals being defensive over playing-time, as well as playing positions within a team. In some instances, this affected team dynamics. One athlete recalled their older teammates’ responses to playing-time, “... they got mad and very passive aggressive about it...,” they continued, “.... they were kind of throwing like little hissy fits, for lack of a better term, that they weren't getting the playing-time because the freshmen really were out working them,” (P3).

Notably, one athlete tied the reception of playing-time to social status within the team. This status affected the ways in which individuals interacted with and treated their teammates:

“... after I started playing, people wanted to talk to me more... which sucks, but when I didn't play, I was a freshman, I felt pretty invisible to everyone else on the team, besides like [undisclosed name] and the freshman I was close to and then suddenly I got better and started playing

and everyone was, like, cool with me, talked to me and like laughed at my jokes... I mean I feel like this might be a common thing on sports teams.”

(P5)

Overall, playing-time decisions were observed to affect *perceptions and interactions* amongst teammates. Most notably, this was observed in athletes making comparisons between themselves and their teammates. These comparisons were often tied to athletes being defensive over playing time or playing positions within a team. In the case of one athlete, playing-time was linked to social status within the team. This status affected the ways in which athletes interacted with and treated their teammates.

Academics

Athletes also cited their academics being affected by playing-time selection decisions. This mainly occurred in athletes who did not receive substantial playing-time. When this occurred, athletes reported having a harder time switching their focus to schoolwork. One athlete noted, “... as soon as I leave the gym, I try to not think about it, but I mean... It also affects academics,” (P8). Further, some athletes would become fixated on what they could do to earn playing-time and prioritized this initiative over their academics:

“I think that it definitely has an impact on me in school because I'll spend more time thinking about, you know, what else I could be doing to get more playing time, like watching film, stuff like that, as opposed to doing my homework... I'll just like be distracted by watching film and seeing how I can improve. I'll just sit down to do my homework and won't end up doing any of my homework.” (P7)

In response to the stress of sport, some athletes planned academic responsibilities around their games and/or practice schedules. This allowed them to reserve time to exclusively focus on either academics or athletics. One athlete remembered a time where they had to compartmentalize their academic work during a collegiate tournament:

“I just pushed my classes off. I'm like, ‘No, I'm stressed out’ ... when we travel for softball, I try to get everything done before or after because if I'm thinking about softball, I can't think about the work, especially a day like that... my mind is going in like different directions...” (P4)

Overall, athletes reported effects to their *academics* when they did not receive playing-time. This occurred due to athletes having trouble switching their focus from practice or games to schoolwork. In some cases, athletes would intentionally prioritize their focus on sport in order to earn more playing-time. Further, some athletes also planned their academic work around their athletic schedule in order to reserve exclusive focus on either school or sport.

Positive Psychological/Emotional Responses

This sub-theme refers to athletes' *favorable affective/cognitive responses* to playing-time selection decisions, which mainly occurred when athletes received playing-time. Athlete responses primarily involved feelings of happiness and excitement. One athlete noted, “... after a game where I receive a lot of playing time ... I feel really happy, I feel super cool like walking off the field,” (P5). Another athlete mentioned, “... [coach] put me into this situation and I made a really nice play and it's kind of like, you know, your adrenaline is like pumping like crazy. I felt really good about it,” (P1).

Athletes also reported increased confidence associated with playing-time. In the case of one athlete, this was tied to the possibility of being able to contribute to the success of the team:

“... the more playing time I get, the better attitude I have because I'm more confident and more excited for games because I know that I could potentially be a game changer, I could potentially be the one that's scoring the goal...” (P6)

Additionally, athletes mentioned feeling a sense of accomplishment when they received playing-time. This was observed in the context of athletes who went from receiving little/no playing-time as an underclassman, to receiving substantial playing-time as an upperclassman:

“I think my biggest achievement was going from being like the last person to ever get put in... I was like, you know, I was actually, quite literally ranked last to starting in my sophomore year last year... it was like, literally the most amazing feeling ever.” (P5)

Overall, athletes reported *positive psychological/emotional responses* to the reception of playing-time. Athlete responses primarily involved feelings of happiness and excitement. Athletes also reported feeling a sense of confidence when receiving playing-time. In the case of one athlete, this confidence was tied to their potential contribution to the team's successes. Further, athletes also reported feeling a sense of accomplishment when receiving playing-time. This occurred in athletes who went from receiving little/no playing-time to receiving substantial playing-time.

Increased Motivation and Work-Rate

Athletes also reported *increased motivation and work-rate* as a result of playing-time selection decisions. In the case of some athletes, the reception of playing-time gave them a more positive outlook, which, in turn, impacted their motivation for sport:

“... my first year, there were a couple games where I wasn't expecting to play and then circumstances changed and I ended up starting and playing a lot. I guess that just gave me a positive mindset going forward. It encouraged me to try harder in practice and things like that.” (P8)

Other athletes reported increased motivation and work-rate in response to not receiving playing-time. Further, receiving unfavorable selection decisions served as a reason to work harder. One athlete mentioned, “...if I get a little time in the game, that means I need to get back to the drawing board and get back to work. Simple as that,” (P6). Another athlete noted:

“... freshman year I didn't pitch a lot. I was the relief pitcher and I've never been the relief pitcher... I was always the starting pitcher and then going to relief pitcher I was like, ‘Well, this sucks, I need to get better right now.’ So, it kind of motivated me more and like really kickstarted me...” (P4)

Overall, athletes reported *increased motivation and work-rate* when both receiving and not receiving playing-time. In the case of some athletes, receiving playing-time served as a source of motivation, encouraging them to work harder in practice. In the case of other athletes, not receiving playing-time served as a means to change their approach, or increase their work-rate in order to receive playing-time.

Dependent on Individual or Team Performance

In the case of some athletes, responses to playing-time were *dependent on individual or team performances*. Further, some athletes' responses were dependent on how they played during the minutes they received. If an athlete did not perform well, this negated any favorable responses they might have to the reception of playing-time. One athlete noted, "...even if I do get a lot of playing time, it's not like I'm like, "Oh great, I played so much today like, great." It's more like, 'Okay, did I do good with the minutes I got?'," (P4).

Athletes reported similar responses to their team's performances. Accordingly, if athletes did not receive minutes in a game and the team lost, they had a more negative outlook. Further, if athletes did not receive playing-time and the team won, it elicited a more indifferent response:

"...as long as we win, like, whatever is better for the team. If we're winning and I'm not playing, that's fine. I mean, I won't love it, but I'll take it... if I'm not playing and we're not winning that's a lot harder to take, just sitting on the bench and watching us lose." (P7)

Overall, athletes' responses to playing-time were *dependent on individual/team performances*. In the case of some athletes, if they individually received minutes and did not play well, this outweighed any satisfaction they might have associated with receiving playing-time. Certain athlete responses were also dependent on team performances. Further, if an athlete didn't receive playing-time and their team lost, they had a more negative outlook. On the contrary, if an athlete did not receive playing-time and the team won, they expressed indifferent responses to playing-time.

Contextual Factors to Playing-Time Selection

This section refers to athlete characteristics and/or outlooks that mediated their perspectives of the selection process. The findings are organized into five sub-themes: *team mentality, positive mindset, self-awareness, acknowledgement of coaching role, and subjective experiences.*

Team Mentality

This sub-theme describes athletes' *team-mentality* when discussing playing-time. This mindset impacted how athletes viewed the overall selection process, regardless of the type of communication or decision an athlete received. In some cases, this was instilled by the environment coaches were trying to create within a team. One athlete noted:

“.. our team culture is every player matters, no matter what ... you'll never see a person who's like really sulking cause they're not playing. They know that they're not playing because right now, like, they're not there...”

(P9)

Another athlete reiterated, “I think it helps when [coach] tells us, you know, it's for the best of the team and she really tries to hone that in on everyone, and it's not like it's an individual thing at all,” (P1).

On the other hand, some athletes displayed this mindset regardless of their team's environment. These athletes consistently reiterated that every athlete on the team, regardless of their playing-status, was essential for their team's success:

“We need everybody on the team, we need everybody who's going to contribute and be a good teammate and push the starters, like you need

everybody on the team to work \hard in practice and work hard in lifts and push each other to make each other better. So, whether you get 90 minutes or zero minutes, everybody means something on the team and everybody is so important for the team.” (P6)

Notably, the presence of a team-oriented mindset was essential in helping athletes to manage the playing-time selection process in a productive manner.

Overall, *team-mentality* was observed to mediate the playing-time selection process in some athletes. *Team-mentality* occurred in two ways: a coach instilling a team-oriented mindset within their team, which reflected in the responses of athletes, or an individual stating this mindset as essential to their team’s success. Further, this mindset helped athletes to frame the playing-time selection process in a more productive manner.

Positive Mindset

Athletes’ *positive mindset* was also a factor that mediated the playing-time selection process. Much like the team mentality athletes displayed, certain athletes’ *positive mindset* helped them to put the playing-time selection process into perspective. Further, a *positive mindset* helped these athletes to focus on the benefits associated with their sport that didn’t involve playing-time. One athlete noted:

“...at least to me, there’s more important things than how much I’m playing and, at least for me, it’s important I just try to look at, like, positive things. At least I’m still getting exercise and still staying in shape. I’m still like spending time with my teammates, which is good. And I’m still at least getting to play basketball, at least some.” (P8)

A positive mindset also helped athletes to stay relaxed and upbeat while performing at the highest level:

“...to be honest with you, soccer is like the biggest stress reliever and it's so fun for me that I like, try not to let those nerves and those stresses get like, overtake my control because that's when I start to not perform as well.” (P6)

Overall, athletes' *positive mindset* helped to mediate the playing-time selection process. For some athletes, it helped to put the playing-time selection process into perspective. For others, it helped to ease stressors associated with their sport and, in turn, better their performance.

Self-Awareness

Some athletes also displayed a sense of *self-awareness* when talking about the overall playing-time selection process. This awareness was especially prevalent in athletes who reported not receiving playing-time at some point in their collegiate career. One athlete noted, “... I will admit, I was not at the level of being a varsity player yet... So, I always understood my coach's decision that I wasn't ready to play varsity...,” (P3). Another athlete expanded:

“I was a sophomore. I was still kind of young and ... I understood there was like, you know, a little bit of ranking, people have a little bit more experience... I thought maybe there was a chance, but I knew that there wasn't a strong chance that I would be starting...” (P1)

Notably, athletes who demonstrated *self-awareness* often had assumptions of their playing status that aligned with their coaches' playing-time decisions. This helped

athletes to be more accepting of their playing status, as well as the overall selection process.

In summary, some athletes demonstrated *self-awareness* when speaking about their playing-status. This awareness was especially prevalent in athletes who reported not receiving playing-time. Further, the *self-awareness* athletes displayed helped them to be more accepting of their coaches' playing-time selection decisions.

Acknowledgement of Coaching Role

This sub-theme encompasses certain athletes' acknowledgement that coaches face difficult decisions during the overall playing-time selection process. Further, these athletes displayed empathy and understanding regarding their coaches' responsibilities in both communicating and selecting athletes to play. This empathy helped athletes to put playing-time communication and selection into perspective. One athlete referenced their coach's job in communicating playing-time to athletes, "I think it's hard. It's a really tough conversation to have with people," (P1). Similarly, another athlete talked about the decisions their coach makes, "I think he just decides based on what gives us the best chance to win. I mean, for him that's his job," (P8).

Overall, athletes who *acknowledged their coach's role* in the process of playing-time selection displayed empathy and understanding for their coaches. This, in turn, helped athletes to put the playing-time selection process into perspective.

Subjective Experiences

Certain athletes were also cognizant that the selection process was a *subjective experience*. From this perspective, athletes were aware that their experiences of playing-time communication and selection did not necessarily reflect their teammates'

experiences. This was present in athletes that reported little/no playing time, as well as substantial playing-time. For example, one athlete noted that their poor experience with the playing-time selection process should not be generalized, "...the girls who've started, they've always started, I don't think they had the same experience," (P2). Athletes who had positive experiences expressed similar opinions, "I personally like the way that the playing-time is communicated to me, I'm also a starter on the team, so it might be different than some other people on my team...", (P6).

Overall, athletes displayed an awareness that their playing-time selection experiences were not necessarily reflective of their teammates' experiences. This awareness allowed athletes to reflect and gain more perspective surrounding the playing-time selection process.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined athletes' perspectives of playing-time selection communication through a social constructivist lens. Nine NCAA Division I-III athletes were interviewed to explore the following research questions: 1) How are collegiate athletes interpreting the communication of playing-time selection decisions made by their coaches? 2) What are the affective, behavioral, cognitive and social outcomes involved in the interpretation of the communication of playing-time selection by collegiate athletes? The results of this study revealed that the communication of selection decisions is a multifaceted, complex process between the player and the coach, which relies on various forms of implicit and explicit communication as well as several influencing and contextual factors.

Explicit Communication

For the explicit communication of playing-time selection decisions, athletes described three important aspects that influenced its constructiveness. First, the format referred to the type and/or amount of coaches' communication. Specifically, while some athletes reported their coaches' communication as detailed and transparent, others reported their coaches' communication as lacking these qualities. Particularly, when communication was not detailed, athletes perceived more uncertainty regarding the reasons for selection decisions. A possible explanation may be perceived role clarity/ambiguity (Beauchamp et al., 2002; Kahn et al., 1964). In reference to sport settings specifically, role ambiguity refers to athletes' uncertainty regarding the extent of their responsibilities, behaviors to execute responsibilities, how they will be assessed, and the repercussions of not fulfilling their role (Beauchamp et al., 2002). Because of a lack of information, role ambiguity could result from unclear communication with the coach, leading to decreased levels of efficacy regarding role execution (Beauchamp & Bray, 2001). Similarly, athletes in the current study reported role ambiguity when their coaches were less transparent with playing-time selection communication. Consequently, athletes reported that they felt uncertain regarding their individual roles and expectations on the team. On the contrary, athletes who experienced transparent communication reported having more clarity surrounding their roles and expectations. Therefore, the transparency of coaches' playing-time selection communication may be an important contributor to athletes' role clarity, enabling a better, more effective team structure.

As a second factor, athletes mentioned the timing of their coaches' playing-time selection communication. In most cases, athletes received the starting-line-up right before

the game, and substitutes were notified during the game. Consequently, athletes had little time for mental preparation for their upcoming performances, which contributed to feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. A better strategy might be to provide athletes with a timeframe by which they will receive selection decisions. For example, in line with Gleddie et al.'s (2019) recommendations for communicating non-selection, coaches should inform athletes of their selection 24 hours before a game. This could reduce anxiety associated with playing-time selection and, in turn, positively impact athletes' competitive performances (Mottaghi et al., 2013). Similarly, athletes in the present study expressed their preference to know their playing-status a day or days prior to a game, as this would help to make them feel more physically and mentally prepared. As such, early communication of playing-time decisions may be integral in helping athletes cope with pre-game stressors.

Finally, athletes reported their coaches' explicitly communicating more with individuals of higher playing status within the team. Specifically, athletes observed coaches communicating more with individuals that frequented the starting line-up and/or played key positions (i.e., softball pitcher). This influenced athletes' perceptions of coaches' preferential treatment of certain individuals over others. This aligns with previous research suggesting coaches' differential treatment of high and low expectancy athletes (Becker & Wrisberg, 2008; Lacy & Martin, 1994; Sinclair & Vealey, 1989). For example, Bray et al. (2002) posed that starters were given more opportunities to execute their role responsibilities than non-starters. Similarly, Beauchamp et al. (2005) showed that non-starters received less training, instructional and positive feedback from their coaches than starters. A possible explanation for this could be coaches' preference or

need to communicate more with individuals that are considered integral in carrying out team processes (Beauchamp et al., 2005). From this perspective, coaches will inevitably communicate more with individuals of a higher playing status because they are more involved in the competitive aspects that lead to the team's success. However, coaches' preferential communication could have negative implications for athletes. For instance, Wilson and Stephens (2007) found that greater levels of communication, instruction and praise in high expectancy athletes (e.g., starters) led them to feel more competent in their abilities compared to low expectancy athletes (e.g., nonstarters). Likewise, in the current study, athletes who started or played key positions received more playing-time selection communication from their coaches. As a result, certain athletes had more clarity regarding their playing status, role, and expectations within the team than others.

Implicit Communication

Athletes identified that coaches were implicitly communicating playing-time decisions through the organizations of groups in practice and commonly occurring coaching patterns. Particularly, athletes were attentive to coaches' assignments of training groups, scrimmage teams, and consistencies in player rotations. This represented a form of non-verbal communication that served as an indicator for athletes' playing status. For example, if an athlete was practicing with the "starters", they could assume they would be starting and/or receiving playing-time in an upcoming competition.

Evidence of implicit communication is present in the organizational and sport context (Dobrescu, 2014; Hoogervorst et al., 2004; Lausic, 2009; Raiola & Di Tore, 2012; Trzaskoma-Bicserdy et al., 2007). In these works, implicit communication is defined as subtle, nonverbal cues (e.g., gestures, body language, facial expressions and

signs) that are understood between group members (Lausic, 2005; Raiola & Di Tore, 2012). For example, if a softball coach wants to communicate to their pitcher during a game, they might use a specific hand signal or gesture to indicate which pitch to throw. Although it involves non-verbal components, implicit communication remains a critical tool in obtaining information from a teammate or coach.

Besides establishing the type of implicit communication utilized in these settings, research also emphasizes the importance of having uniform communication. Specifically, when explicit and implicit communication conflict, organizations and teams may experience inconsistency in information, which, in turn, creates a lack of trust in communication (Hoogervorst et al., 2004; Lausic 2009). For example, if an athlete is playing with the starting group in practice, but is not announced as part of the starting line-up before a game, this may create confusion and, subsequently, impact athletes' trust and respect in coaches' decisions. This could, in turn, negatively impact the coach-athlete relationship, which relies on consistent and productive communication to develop and thrive (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Jowett 2005). Based on the current study, the presence of coaches' implicit communication of playing-time selection decisions, in tandem with explicit communication, poses unique implications regarding an athletes' overall perception of their role and the coach-athlete relationship.

Responses to Playing-Time Communication

An important aspect that emerged from the results of the present study is the distinction between the responses to the communication of selection decisions and the selection decision itself. For example, some athletes were obviously disappointed with a negative selection decision, but perceived the communication of the decision as

constructive and helpful. Other athletes might have been happy with the selection decision, but received little to no feedback as to why they deserved to be selected. In essence, the nature of the communication of playing-time decisions may have distinct outcomes from the actual decision itself.

In the present study, athletes' responses to communication were mainly dependent on the transparency of playing-time selection decisions. As previously mentioned, when athletes experienced a lack of transparency, they felt uncertain about their roles and expectations within the team. Consequently, this led athletes to feel stressed, anxious, confused and less confident about their playing status. For example, one athlete noted, "... when I got taken out of the starting lineup, [I] didn't really know why... that had a big impact on my confidence level and I ended up not having a great year..." (P7). The findings of the present study support the notion that uncertainty surrounding playing-time selection decisions not only creates role ambiguity in athletes, but also elicits adverse affective/cognitive responses. Therefore, coaches may wish to reduce the uncertainty regarding playing-time selection decisions through more universal, transparent, and timely communication. This type of communication may elicit enhanced role clarity in athletes, as well as more favorable affective/cognitive responses to selection communication (Gleddie et al., 2019; Neely et al., 2016).

It is worth noting that some sports have very distinct ways of communicating playing-time selection. For example, in the sport of football, depth charts are utilized to display the placement of athletes (e.g., starting and secondary players). Similarly, in ice hockey, coaches formulate and assign substitution lines that often play together over the course of a season. In both cases, these methods of selection communication are expected

as common occurrences in the sport itself. Further, the presence of distinct playing-time selection communication presents unique opportunities for future research, which could examine the perceptions and outcomes of playing-time selection communication within these settings.

As noted above, athletes displayed distinct responses to playing-time selection communication and playing-time selection decisions. When exclusively discussing playing-time selection decisions, athletes based their responses on receiving or being denied playing-time. Consistent with existing literature, athletes responded negatively when they did not receive playing-time (e.g., stress, worry, nervousness, sadness, disappointment, frustration; Barnett, 2007; Blakelock et al., 2016; Brown & Potrac, 2009; Gleddie et al., 2019; Harenberg et al., 2019). On the contrary, receiving playing-time elicited more favorable responses in athletes, including happiness, excitement, increased confidence and accomplishment.

Athletes also noted altered teammate perceptions and interactions based on playing-time decisions. This occurred when athletes did not receive playing-time, and/or observed someone else playing over them. Most athletes acknowledged that altered teammate perceptions and interactions occurred in a negative light. For instance, one athlete mentioned, "... it's important that you don't have those like little, you know, little devil thoughts telling you, like, oh, like, you know, that could be you," (P1). Consistent with findings in Social Comparison Theory (SCT), in the absence of objective (and often numeric) feedback, athletes resorted to subjective performance comparisons between themselves and teammates of a higher playing status (Festinger, 1954). These

comparisons were often in a ranked fashion, meaning athletes rated themselves as better, similar, or worse than individuals playing over them (Festinger, 1954).

Athletes in the current study also noted being defensive over playing-time and/or positions. This occurred when individuals who had previously been dominant in a position observed other athletes receiving playing-time over them. These findings correspond well with existing literature addressing the outcomes of positional competition in sport (Harenberg et al., 2016b; Harenberg et al., 2019). Particularly, observing other teammates receiving playing-time may elicit frustration and/or conflict in athletes. Athletes may also perceive teammates who challenge their playing status as threats (Boroumand et al., 2018). Athletes' comparisons and defensiveness over playing-time could negatively impact team functioning, as well as personal relationships within teams (Harenberg. et. al., 2016a). Based on these findings, the current study suggests that athletes' responses to the reception of playing-time have the potential to negatively impact the relationships and interactions that occur between teammates.

Playing-time selection decisions also had an impact on athletes' academic performances. This almost exclusively occurred when an athlete did not receive playing-time, which prompted them to focus more on sport than school. Although existing literature has yet to address the impact of playing-time on academics, there is research examining the impact of collegiate sport participation on the academic success of student athletes. In examining the experiences of male collegiate basketball players, Adler and Adler (1985) found that athletes compromised their academic success in order to cope with sport stressors. Similarly, athletes in the current study noted that the stress associated with not receiving playing-time led them to prioritize sport over school. This

led athletes to either ignore schoolwork entirely in exchange for watching film or practicing and/or scheduling schoolwork around their practices and games. These findings indicate that in addition to stress associated with athletes' overall involvement in sport, playing-time selection decisions also have the potential to impact athletes' academic success.

Athletes also mentioned their motivational responses to playing-time selection decisions. Previous research in positional competition supports these findings. Specifically, Harenberg et al. (2016a) suggested that athletes' responses to positional competition include increased motivation and performance. Similarly, some athletes in the current study were motivated to work harder when they observed teammates playing over them or they did not receive playing-time. In the case of other athletes, the experience of receiving playing-time served as a source of motivation and inspiration to work harder. These findings suggest that the motivational responses of athletes to playing-time selection decisions are subjective; some athletes will be motivated by receiving playing-time, and others will be motivated by not receiving playing-time.

Influences and Contextual Factors to Playing-Time

Communication of playing-time selection is an interactive process between an athlete and the coach. Several factors related to these two agents may influence the constructiveness of the communication of playing-time. In the present study, these included coaching tendencies, individual/team performances and athlete characteristics. In addition to influencing factors, the communication between athletes and coaches never occurs in a vacuum, but rather within a team context. The current study highlighted these

contextual factors as team mentality, positive mindset, self-awareness, acknowledgment of the coaching role and subjective experiences.

The aspects of the communication of playing-time decisions are similar to other group processes, which capture the interaction between athletes and coaches in complex models. An example of this is the Multidimensional Model of Leadership (MML; Chelladurai, 2017). At the heart of the MML is that characteristics of the leader, member, and situation interact and influence one another to achieve effective leadership in teams. Similarly, the theoretical framework for factors influencing the transmission and reception of role responsibilities in sport views aspects of the focal person (i.e., the athlete), role sender (i.e., coach) and situation as influences to effective role communication (Eys et al., 2005; Harenberg et al., 2016a). These frameworks contain elements that relate to the communication of playing time. For instance, coaches (i.e., leaders/role senders) may have a preferred style of communication, which may be determined by their personality and experiences, as well as other factors. Athletes (i.e., members/focal persons) may have personal characteristics (e.g., personality, preferences, experiences) that determine their preference for communication. Finally, situational characteristics could influence the communication of playing-time as well. For instance, coaches might communicate playing-time information with a greater number of athletes at the beginning of the season, as playing status has yet to be formally established. On the contrary, at the end of the season, coaches might not communicate playing-time in as much depth, as athletes may not need as much detail to know their playing status. Given the conceptual similarities, playing-time selection communication is a complex, interactive process with various influencing and contextual factors. More theoretical and

model-building work may be warranted to understand the entirety and complexity of this process.

Implications

In addition to the theoretical contributions, the present study also has important applications for coaches and athletes. Primarily, the findings highlight the importance of the quality and timing of coaches' playing-time selection communication (Gleddie et al., 2019; Neely et al., 2016). Clear, detail-oriented, and early communication of playing-time decisions provides athletes with a better idea of expectations and roles within the team. Clear, detailed, and early communication could help athletes cope and productively respond to their playing-status, as well as manage negative outcomes associated with not receiving playing-time (e.g., adverse affective/cognitive responses, academic effects).

The quality and timing of coach communication could also foster team unity and prevent uncertainty, social comparison, and conflict. For instance, through coaches' clear, specific, and early communication, athletes within the team may have a better understanding of their roles, performances (e.g., personal and team) and areas to improve their abilities. Further, clear, specific and early communication may help cultivate more conducive relationships between teammates, as athletes would have an objective idea of why playing-time decisions were made, and how they might be able to improve to maintain or earn more playing-time.

In consideration of the motivational and contextual factors to playing-time selection, coaches might also tailor their communication of playing-time to individual athlete characteristics. For example, if an athlete displays a tendency to prioritize the team's needs/goals over their own (i.e., wanting to do whatever is best for the team), a

coach might frame an unfavorable selection decision as being the best decision for the overall team's success. Given the time and task-related demands involved in the coaching profession, this might be difficult. Yet, based on the current study, athletes might respond in a more positive manner if their coach takes the time to outline their specific playing-status according to their preferences.

Finally, the current study showed athletes experiencing both implicit and explicit communication from their coaches. Although not directly stated by athletes, the uniformity of this communication could be an important factor for coaches to consider (Dobrescu, 2014; Hoogervorst et al., 2004; Lausic, 2009). As such, coaches should aim to align their actions with the explicit communication they give to their athletes. In doing so, athletes may have a clearer picture of their role and playing-status within the team. Future research should focus on the uniformity of implicit and explicit communication in sport, and the impact that this alignment of communication has on overall team functioning.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the present study. Primarily, most participants interviewed were Division III athletes in team sports (i.e., seven NCAA Division III athletes, and two NCAA Division I athletes). Therefore, findings may not be fully reflective of the experiences of other NCAA athletes (i.e., NCAA Division I and II and/or individual sport athletes) and/or professional athletes. Future research should focus on incorporating perspectives from multiple sport divisions (e.g., NCAA, USport), individual sport athletes, and professional athletes. The current study was primarily conducted with individuals who identified their race/ethnicity as white. To gain a more accurate perspective of athletes' perceptions of playing-time selection communication,

future research should focus on incorporating a diverse pool of participants representing a variety of backgrounds and minoritized experiences. Additionally, participants may not have been completely authentic regarding their experiences of playing-time selection communication due to fears of being identified, or due to the influences of the Covid-19 pandemic on their recent playing and thereby, selection experiences. Finally, the researcher has past experiences as a collegiate athlete. With this in consideration, it's important to acknowledge any potential biases that may have influenced the current study.

Conclusion

The present study sheds light on the complex and interactive process of playing-time selection communication. Important connections between the presence of playing-time selection communication and the responses of athletes were highlighted. Based on these findings, coaches are advised to communicate playing-time in a clear, specific, and timely manner. These elements of communication provide athletes with more clarity surrounding their roles and expectations on the team, whilst potentially alleviating negative responses associated with poor playing-time selection communication. To gain further understanding of playing-time selection communication, future research should focus on influences and mediators of the selection process, as well as the interaction and effects of the implicit and explicit communication utilized by coaches. In doing so, a conceptual model of playing-time selection could be developed and applied to various communicative processes within teams.

RESEARCH MANUSCRIPT

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APPENDIX A

SOCIAL MEDIA RECRUITMENT POST



Are you a current NCAA or USport student athlete?

**IF SO, YOU MIGHT QUALIFY FOR A
STUDY ON PLAYING-TIME SELECTION**

Eligible participants receive a \$25 gift card.

If interested, contact **Anna Bottino**

abottino@ithaca.edu

APPENDIX B
PRE-SCREENING SURVEY

- 1) What is your age?
- 2) How would you describe your gender?
 - Female (including transgender woman)
 - Male (including transgender male)
 - Prefer to describe as _____ (e.g., non-binary, gender-fluid, agender)
 - Prefer not to say
- 3) Which of the following best describes you:
 - American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Asian
 - Black or African American
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - Native Hawaii or Other Pacific Islander
 - Non-Hispanic or Latino
 - White
 - Prefer to describe as _____
 - Prefer not to say
- 4) Please list the NCAA collegiate sport(s) you are participating in:
- 5) Please check your current academic status:
 - First Year
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior
- 6) Please check the Division of your sport team:
 - Division I
 - Division II
 - Division III
- 7) In the last 12 months, did you experience an injury that kept you out of competition with your team (prior to the shutdown due to COVID 19 in March 2020)?
 - Yes
 - No
- 8) **If yes**, note how long you were excluded from participation:
- 9) **If yes**, describe how you were excluded from participation (e.g., not playing at all, playing less time, practice but no competition)

10) Do you consider yourself a starter?

Yes

No

11) Please estimate the percentage of games you have “started” in within the last year (if you don’t know, take a guess):

12) Please rate the amount of playing-time you typically receive in a season below:

Minimal

Adequate

Substantial

13) Do you currently have a scholarship to play collegiate sport?

Yes

No

14) If yes, what percentage of your tuition is covered by your scholarship (if you don’t know exactly, take a guess).

APPENDIX C

EMAIL TO PROSPECTIVE INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Hello,

My name is Anna Bottino. I am a graduate student at Ithaca College, receiving my degree in exercise and sport sciences with a concentration in sport psychology.

If you are receiving this email, it means that, based off of your participation in the survey titled “**Athletes’ Perspectives of Playing-Time Selection Communication in Collegiate Sport**”, you are eligible to participate in the qualitative interviews for this study. **Participation is completely voluntary.** The interview process will take between 30-60 minutes, and will be conducted over Zoom. Attached is a **Calendly link** to sign up for an interview time between the dates of December 16th and January 10th.

<https://calendly.com/annabottino/playing-time-selection-interviews>

If you choose to participate in this study, please read and sign the informed consent form attached. Upon doing so, please send the signed form back to this email address: abottino@ithaca.edu.

Participants receive a \$25 Amazon Gift Card.

If you choose not to participate, please disregard this email.

The purpose of the study is to answer two research questions:

3. How are collegiate athletes interpreting the communication of playing-time selection decisions made by their coaches?
4. What are the behavioral, cognitive, and affective outcomes involved in the interpretation of the communication of playing-time selection by collegiate athletes?

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at:

Anna Bottino, Graduate Student
Department of Exercise Science and Athletic Training
abottino@ithaca.edu

Or my faculty advisor at:

Dr. Justine Vosloo, Associate Professor
Department of Exercise Science and Athletic Training
jvosloo@ithaca.edu

Sincerely,
Anna Bottino

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANT'S INTERVIEW

Title of the Study: Athlete Perspectives of Playing-Time Selection Communication in Collegiate Team Sport

Principal Investigator: Anna Bottino, Graduate Student, Ithaca College; Department of Exercise Science and Athletic Training

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Justine Vosloo, Associate Professor, Ithaca College; Department of Exercise Science and Athletic Training

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a current NCAA or USport student-athlete that is 18 years or older. Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You are not required to participate in this study. You may stop or withdraw your participation from this study at any time.

Important Information about this Research Study

Purpose of the study: To develop an understanding regarding collegiate athlete interpretations of playing-time selection, and the effects of this interpretation.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview over Zoom.

Interview questions will address your experiences as a collegiate athlete with playing-time.

The total time commitment for participation is 30-90 minutes.

Risks and discomforts associated with this research: there are minimal risks associated with this research.

Direct benefits to the participants: There are no direct benefits, however, understanding the ways in which athletes interpret and are affected by playing-time selection decisions may help both coaches and athletes tailor their communication and understanding in order to elicit more positive outcomes.

Please read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether you would like to participate in this research study.

1. Purpose of the Study

To gain understanding regarding collegiate athlete interpretations of the communication

of playing-time selection decisions, as well as the affective, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes of collegiate athlete interpretations of playing-time selection decisions.

2. Benefits of the Study

Please include potential benefits of research for:

- There are no direct benefits to the participants, however, the interview process may result in self-reflection throughout the process and allow the participants to gain insight into aspects of their own experiences with playing-time selection.
- The researcher may gain knowledge regarding the communication and interpretation of playing-time selection decisions in sport.

3. What You Will Be Asked to Do

- If eligible, you will be asked to schedule a time for an interview over Zoom addressing your experiences with playing-time selection in college. The interview is expected to take between 30-90 minutes.
- You must be 18 years or older to take part in this study. First-year student athletes will not be considered for this study due to current COVID-19 shut-down, and subsequent lack of experience with collegiate playing-time selection decisions. Athletes who have experienced an injury that kept them out of competition during their most recent competitive season will also not be considered for the study.

4. Withdrawal from the Study

- You are free to withdraw from the interview process at any time. You are also free to omit answers during the interview process that make you feel uncomfortable.
- If you withdraw from the study, you will still receive a \$25 gift card.
- If you withdraw from the study, data from your interview will be properly disposed of.

5. Risks

- The risk for this study is minimal.
- If you find any of the issues in this interview to be disturbing, please contact the faculty advisor listed below or contact the national substance abuse and mental health services administration (SAMHSA) at 1-800-662-4357.

6. How the Data will be Maintained in Confidence

Data from interviews will be stored on a password protected computer owned and solely accessed by the researcher. This data may include audio and video files, as well as transcribed interviews. Informed consent forms and data will be kept for 3 years upon completion of the study in a locked cabinet that is owned by the faculty advisor. After 3 years, this data will be disposed of. Participants' names will remain anonymous in the final thesis project as well as subsequent publications.

7. Use of information beyond this study

Identifying information will be removed and this de-identified information used for future research without additional informed consent from the participant.

8. Compensation for Injury

If you suffer an injury that requires any treatment or hospitalization as a direct result of

this study, the cost for such care will be charged to you. If you have insurance, you may bill your insurance company. You will be responsible to pay all costs not covered by your insurance. Ithaca College will not pay for any care, lost wages, or provide other financial compensation.

9. If You Would Like More Information about the Study

Primary Investigator
Anna Bottino, Graduate Student
abottino@ithaca.edu

Faculty Advisor
Dr. Justine Vosloo, Associate Professor
jvosloo@ithaca.edu

Ithaca College IRB
Peggy Ryan Williams Center
953 Danby Road
Ithaca, NY 14850
irb@ithaca.edu
(607) 274-3113

I have read the above and I understand its contents. I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.

Print or Type Name

Signature

Date

I give my permission to be audiotaped.

Signature

Date

I give my permission to be videotaped.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Warm-Up Question

Tell me about why you pursued collegiate athletics.

Playing-Time Selection: Interpretation and Outcomes

There are selection decisions that are inevitably made in the realm of collegiate sport. How would you describe the ways in which playing-time selection decisions are made on your respective team?

As a player, how do you prefer to have playing-time selection decisions communicated to you?

Tell me about a time when a playing-time selection decision affected you as a player.

- Include anything in pre screening?

Wrap-Up Question

In reflecting on your experiences of playing-time in college, do you have any final comments regarding what we have discussed today?

APPENDIX F

ONLINE COVER SHEET FOR RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Hello – I am studying the ways in which collegiate athletes interpret the communication of playing-time from their coaches, and the affective, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes of this interpretation. The following questions address your experiences with playing-time selection in college. You can skip or choose not to answer questions. You can also stop or withdraw from the survey at any time.

By participating in this survey, I am acknowledging that I am 18 years or older.

The survey should take 5 minutes to complete.

The purpose of this survey is to identify individuals that are eligible to participate in a study on playing-time selection communication in sport. Please list a valid email and phone number below if, following this survey, you wish to be contacted for participation in this study.

Email:

Phone Number:

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at:

Anna Bottino, Graduate Student
Department of Exercise Science and Athletic Training
abottino@ithaca.edu

Or my faculty advisor at:
Dr. Justine Vosloo, Associate Professor
Department of Exercise Science and Athletic Training
jvosloo@ithaca.edu